The Autobiography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

entitled by herself:

"The Story of the Springtime of a Little White Flower"

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Preface

As we become acquainted with the histories of those in whom, in long succession, God has been pleased to show forth examples of holiness of life, it seems as if every phase of human existence had in the history of the Church received its consecration as a power to bring men nearer to their Maker. But there is no limit to the types of sanctity which the Creator is pleased to unfold before His creatures.

To many, on reading for the first time the story of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face, it came almost as a shock to find a very youthful member of an austere Order, strictly retired from the world, engaged in hidden prayer and mortification, appearing before us to reveal to the whole world the wonders of the close intimacy of friendship to which her Divine Spouse had been pleased to call her. Certainly the way by which Saint Thérèse was led is not the normal life of Carmel, nor hers the manner whereby most Carmelites are called to accomplish the wondrous apostolate of intercession to which their lives are given. But no less certain is it that, in her particular case, her work for God and her apostolate were not to be confined between the walls of her religious home, or to be limited by her few years on earth.

In the first place, we know that it was by obedience that the record of God's dealings with her soul were set down in writing. And, again, the long tale of graces granted in such strange profusion through her intercession is proof sufficient that it was not without Divine permission and guidance that the history of her special and peculiar vocation has become the property of all Catholics in every land. It is for God to keep, and for Him to make known, the secrets of His Love for men. And, in the case of Saint Thérèse, it has been His Will to divulge His secrets in most generous consideration for our needs.

What are the hidden treasures which Our Divine Master thus reveals to us through His chosen little servant ?

It is the old story of simplicity in God's service, of the perfect accomplishment of small recurring duties, of trustful confidence in Him who made and has redeemed and sanctified us. Humility, self-effacement, obedience, hiddenness, unfaltering charity, with all the self-control and constant effort that they imply, are written on every page of the history of this little Saint. And, as we turn its pages, the lesson is borne in upon our souls that there is no surer nor safer way of pleasing Our Father Who is in Heaven than by remaining ever as little children in His sight. Doubtless for many of her clients whose hearts are kindled as they read this book, Saint Thérèse will obtain, as she has done so often in the past, wonderful gifts for health of soul and body. But may she win for all of us without exception a deep and fruitful conviction of the unchanging truth, that unless we become as little children in the doing of our Heavenly Father's Will, we cannot enter into our Eternal Home.

Francis Cardinal Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster

Feast of the Presentation of Our Blessed Lady, 1912.

Prologue

In the month of September, 1843, a young man of twenty climbed the mountain of the Great St. Bernard. His eyes shone with a holy enthusiasm as the splendor of the Alps stirred to the depths his responsive nature. Presently, accustomed as they were to discern God's beauty in the beauty of His handiwork, they glistened with tears. He paused for a space, then, continuing his journey, soon reached the celebrated monastery that like a beacon on those heights darts afar its beams of faith and magnificent charity.

The Prior, struck by the frank and open countenance of his guest, welcomed him with more than wonted hospitality. Louis Joseph Stanislaus Martin was the pilgrim's name. He was born on August 22, 1823, at Bordeaux, while his father, a brave and devout soldier, was captain in the garrison there. "God has predestined this little one for Himself," said the saintly Bishop of Bordeaux on the occasion of his baptism, and events have proved the truth of his words. From this town, by the banks of the Garonne, his parents went to Alençon in lower Normandy, and there in their new home; as in their old one, Louis was the cherished Benjamin.

It was not the loveliness of Swiss lakes and mountains and skies that had drawn the traveler from distant Alençon. He came to the monastery—and his journey was chiefly on foot—to consecrate his days to God. On learning his purpose the Prior questioned him upon his knowledge of Latin, only to discover that the young aspirant had not completed his course of studies in that language. " I am indeed sorry, my child," said the venerable monk, "since this is an essential condition, but you must not be disheartened. Go back to your own country, apply yourself diligently, and when you have ended your studies we shall receive you with open arms."

Louis was disappointed. He set out for home—for exile he would have said—but before long he saw clearly that his life was to be dedicated to God in another and equally fruitful way, and that the Alpine monastery was to be nothing more to him than a sweet memory.

A few years after the vain quest of Louis Martin, a similar scene was enacted in Alençon itself. Accompanied by her mother, Zélie Guérin—an attractive and pious girl—presented herself at the Convent of the Sisters of Charity in the hope of gaining admission. For years it had been her desire to share the Sisters' work, but this was not to be. In the interview that followed, the Superioress—guided by the Holy Ghost— decided unhesitatingly that Zélie's vocation was not for the religious life. God wanted her in the world, and so she returned to her parents, and to the companionship of her elder sister and her younger brother. Shortly afterwards the gates of the Visitation Convent at Le Mans closed upon her beloved sister, and Zélie's thoughts turned to the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. "O my God"—she repeated constantly— "since I am unworthy to be Thy Spouse, like my dear sister, I shall enter the married state to fulfill Thy Holy Will, and I beseech Thee to make me the mother of many children, and to grant that all of them may be dedicated to Thee."

God gave ear to her prayer, and His Finger was visible in the circumstances which led to her becoming the wife of Louis Martin, on July 12, 1858, in Alençon's lovely Church of Notre Dame. Like the chaste Tobias, they were joined together in matrimony—"*solely for*

the love of children, in whom God's Name might be blessed for ever and ever." Nine white flowers bloomed in this sacred garden. Of the nine, four were transplanted to Paradise before their buds had quite unfolded, while five were gathered in God's walled gardens upon earth, one entering the Visitation Convent at Caen, the others the Carmel of Lisieux.

From the cradle all were dedicated to Mary Immaculate, and all received her name: Marie Louise, Marie Pauline, Marie Léonie, Marie Hélène, who died at the age of four and a half, Marie Joseph Louis, Marie Joseph Jean Baptiste, Marie Céline, Marie Mélanie Thérèse, who died when three months old, and lastly, *Marie Françoise Thérèse.*

The two boys were the fruit of prayers and tears. After the birth of the four elder girls, their parents entreated St. Joseph to obtain for them the favor of a son who should become a priest and a missionary. Marie Joseph soon was given them, and his pretty ways appealed to all hearts, but only five months had run their course when Heaven demanded what it had lent. Then followed more urgent novenas.

The grandeur of the Priesthood, glorious upon earth, ineffable in eternity, was so well understood by those Christian parents, that their hearts coveted it most dearly. At all costs the family must have a Priest of the Lord, one who would be an apostle, peradventure a martyr. But, "*the thoughts of the Lord are not our thoughts, His ways are not our ways.*" Another little Joseph was born, and with him hope once again grew strong. Alas! nine months had scarcely passed when he, too, fled from this world and joined his angel brother.

They did not ask again. Yet, could the veil of the future have been lifted, their heavy hearts would, of a surety, have been comforted. A child was to be vouchsafed them who would be a herald of Divine love, not to China alone, but to all the ends of the earth.

Nay, they themselves were destined to shine as apostles, and we read on one of the first pages of the Portuguese edition of the Autobiography, these significant words of an eminent Jesuit:

> "To the Sacred Memory of Louis Joseph Stanislaus Martin and of Zélie Guérin, the blessed parents of Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus, for an example to all Christian parents."

They little dreamed of this future apostolate, nevertheless they made ready their souls day by day to be God's own instruments in God's good time. With most loving resignation they greeted the many crosses which the Lord laid upon them—the Lord whose tender name of Father is truest in the dark hour of trial.

Every morning saw them at Mass; together they knelt at the Holy Table. They strictly observed the fasts and abstinences of the Church, kept Sunday as a day of complete rest from work in spite of the remonstrance of friends, and found in pious reading their most delightful recreation. They prayed in common—after the touching example of Captain Martin, whose devout way of repeating the *Our Father* brought tears to all eyes. Thus the great Christian virtues flourished in their home. Wealth did not bring luxury in its train, and a strict simplicity was invariably observed.

"How mistaken are the great majority of men!" Madame Martin used often to say. "If they are rich, they at once desire honors; and if these are obtained, they are still unhappy; for never can that heart be satisfied which seeks anything but God."

Her whole ambition as a mother was directed to Heaven. "Four of my children are already well settled in life," she once wrote; "and the others will go likewise to that Heavenly Kingdom—enriched with greater merit because the combat will have been more prolonged."

Charity in all its forms was a natural outlet to the piety of these simple hearts. Husband and wife set aside each year a considerable portion of their earnings for the Propagation of the Faith; they relieved poor persons in distress, and ministered to them with their own hands. On one occasion Monsieur Martin, like a good Samaritan, was seen to raise a drunken man from the ground in a busy thoroughfare, take his bag of tools, support him on his arm, and lead him home. Another time when he saw, in a railway station, a poor and starving epileptic without the means to return to his distant home, he was so touched with pity that he took off his hat and, placing in it an alms, proceeded to beg from the passengers on behalf of the sufferer. Money poured in, and it was with a heart brimming over with gratitude that the sick man blessed his benefactor.

Never did he allow the meannesses of human respect to degrade his Christian dignity. In whatever company he might be, he always saluted the Blessed Sacrament when passing a Church; and he never met a priest without paying him a mark of respect. A word from his lips sufficed to silence whosoever dared blaspheme in his presence.

In reward for his virtues, God showered even temporal blessings on His faithful servant. In 1871 he was able to give up his business as a jeweler, and retire to a house in the Rue St. Blaise. The making of point-lace, however, begun by Madame Martin, was still carried on.

In that house the "Little Flower of Jesus" first saw the sunshine. Again and again, in the pages of her Autobiography, she calls herself by this modest name of the *Little Flower,* emblematic of her humility, her purity, her simplicity, and it may be added, of the poetry of her soul. The reader will learn in the Epilogue how it was also used by one of her favorite martyr-saints—the now Blessed Théophane Vénard. On the manuscript of her Autobiography she set the title: "*The Story of the Springtime of a little white Flower,*" and in truth such it was, for long before the rigors of life's winter came round, the Flower was blossoming in Paradise.

It was, however, in mid-winter, January 2, 1873, that this ninth child of Louis Martin and Zélie Guérin was born. Marie and Pauline were at home for the Christmas holidays from the Visitation Convent at Le Mans, and though there was, it is true, a slight disappointment that the future priest was still denied them, it quickly passed, and the little one was regarded as a special gift from Heaven. Later on, her beloved Father delighted in calling her his "Little Queen," adding at times the high-sounding titles—"of France and Navarre."

The Little Queen was indeed well received that winter's morning, and in the course of the day a poor waif rang timidly at the door of the happy home, and presented a paper bearing the following simple stanza :

"Smile and swiftly grow;
All beckons thee to joy,
Sweet love, and tenderest care,
Smile gladly at the dawn,
Bud of an hour !—for thou

Shalt be a stately rose."

It was a charming prophecy, for the bud unfolded its petals and became a rose—a rose of love—but not for long, "for the space of a morn !"

On January 4, she was carried to the Church of Notre Dame to receive the Sacrament of Baptism; her eldest sister, Marie, was her godmother, and she was given the name of *Marie Françoise Thérèse.* [1]

All was joy at first, but soon the tender bud drooped on its delicate stem: little hope was held out—it must wither and die. "You must pray to St. Francis de Sales," wrote her aunt from the convent at Le Mans, "and you must promise, if the child recovers, to call her by her second name, Frances." This was a sword-thrust for the Mother. Leaning over the cradle of her Thérèse, she awaited the coming of the end, saying: "Only when the last hope has gone, will I promise to call her Frances."

The gentle St. Francis waived his claim in favour of the great Reformer of the Carmelite Order: the child recovered, and so retained her sweet name of Thérèse. Sorrow, however, was mixed with the Mother's joy, when it became necessary to send the babe to a foster-mother in the country. There the "little rose-bud" grew in beauty, and after some months had gained strength sufficient to allow of her being brought back to Alençon. Her memory of this short but happy time spent with her sainted Mother in the Rue St. Blaise was extraordinarily vivid. Today a tablet on the balcony of No. 42 informs the passers-by that here was born a certain Carmelite, by name, Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face. Fifteen years have gone since the meeting in Heaven of Madame Martin and her Carmelite child, and if the pilgrimage to where the Little Flower first saw the light of day, be not so large as that to the grave where her remains await their glorious resurrection, it may nevertheless be numbered in thousands. And to the English-speaking pilgrim there is an added pleasure in the fact that her most notable convert, the first minister of the United Free Church of Scotland to enter the True Fold, performs, with his convert wife, the courteous duties of host.

It will not be amiss to say a brief word here on the brother and sister of Madame Martin. Her sister—in religion, Sister Marie Dosithea—led a life so holy at Le Mans that she was cited by Dom Guéranger, perhaps the most distinguished Benedictine of the nineteenth century, as the model of a perfect nun. By her own confession, she had never been guilty from earliest childhood of the smallest deliberate fault. She died on February 24, 1877. It was in the convent made fragrant by such holiness that her niece Pauline Martin, elder sister and "little mother" of Thérèse, and for five years her Prioress at the Carmel, received her education. And if the Little Flower may have imbibed the liturgical spirit from her teachers, the daughters of St. Benedict in Lisieux, so that she could say before her death: "I do not think it is possible for anyone to have desired more than I to assist properly at choir and to recite perfectly the Divine Office"—may it not be to the influences from Le Mans

[1] The baptismal entry, with its numerous signatures, is shown to visitors, and a tablet in the baptistery of the beautiful Gothic church tells the pilgrim that here the "Little Queen" was made a child of God. (Editor)

that may be traced something of the honey-sweet spirit of St. Francis de Sales which pervades the pages of the Autobiography ?

With the brother of Zélie Guérin the reader will make acquaintance in the narrative of Thérèse. He was a chemist in Lisieux, and it was there his daughter Jeanne Guérin married Dr. La Néele and his younger child Marie entered the Carmel. Our foreign missionaries had a warm friend in the uncle of Thérèse—for his charities he was made godfather to an African King; and to the Catholic Press—that home missionary—he was ever most devoted. Founder, at Lisieux, of the Nocturnal Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and a zealous member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, he was called to his abundant reward on September 28, 1909. Verily the lamp of faith is not extinct in the land of the Norman.

The Father of Thérèse, after the death of his wife, likewise made his home in the delightful town which lies amid the beautiful apple orchards of the valley of the Touques. Lisieux is deeply interesting by reason of its fine old churches of St. Jacques and St. Pierre, and its wonderful specimens of quaint houses, some of which date from the twelfth century. In matters of faith it is neither fervent nor hostile, and in 1877 its inhabitants little thought that through their new citizen, Marie Françoise Thérèse Martin, their town would be rendered immortal.

"The cell at Lisieux reminds us of the cell of the Blessed Gabriel at Isola. There is the same even tenor of way, the same magnificent fidelity in little things, the same flames of divine charity, consuming but concealed. Nazareth, with the simplicity of its Child, and the calm abysmal love of Mary and Joseph—Nazareth, adorable but imitable, gives the key to her spirit, and her Autobiography does but repeat the lessons of the thirty hidden years."[2]

And it repeats them with an unrivaled charm. "This master of asceticism," writes a biographer of St. Ignatius Loyola, "loved the garden and loved the flowers. In the balcony of his study he sat gazing on the stars: it was then Lainez heard him say: 'Oh, how earth grows base to me when I look on Heaven!' . . . The like imaginative strain, so scorned of our petty day, inhered in all the lofty souls of that age. Even the Saints of our day speak a less radiant language: and sanctity shows 'shorn of its rays' through the black fog of universal utilitarianism, the materiality which men have drawn into the very lungs of their souls."[3]

This is not true of the sainted authoress of the chapters that follow—"less radiant," in the medium of a translation. In her own inimitable pages, as in those of a Campion or an Ignatius, a Teresa of Avila, or a John of the Cross—the Spirit of Poetry is the handmaiden of Holiness. This new lover of flowers and student of the stars, this "strewer of roses," has uplifted a million hearts from the "base earth" and "black fog" to the very throne of God, and her mission is as yet but begun.

The pen of Soeur Thérèse herself must now take up the narrative, it will do so in words that do not merely tell of love but set the heart on fire, and at the same time lay bare the workings of God in a soul that "since the age of three never refused the Good God anything." The writing of this Autobiography was an act of obedience, and the Prioress who imposed the task sought, in all simplicity, her own personal edification. But the

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[2] *As Little Children*, the abridged life of Soeur Thérèse, (Orphans Press, Rochdale).

[3] Francis Thompson

fragrance of its pages was such that she was advised to publish them to the world. She did so in 1899 under the title of *L'Histoire d'une Ame.* An English version by M. H. Dziewicki appeared in 1901.

This new translation relates more fully the story of the childhood, girlhood, and brief convent days of Soeur Thérèse. It tells of her "Roses," and sets forth again, in our worldwide tongue, her worldwide embassy—the ever ancient message of God's Merciful Love, the ever new *way* to Him of "confidence and self-surrender."

The Editor, T.N. Taylor

Chapter 1

Earliest Memories

It is to you, dear Mother, that I am about to confide the story of my soul. When you asked me to write it, I feared the task might unsettle me, but since then Our Lord has deigned to make me understand that by simple obedience I shall please Him best. I begin therefore to sing what must be my eternal song: "the Mercies of the Lord." (Psalms 89:1).

Before setting about my task I knelt before the statue of Our Lady which had given my family so many proofs of Our Heavenly Mother's loving care.[4] As I knelt, I begged of that dear Mother to guide my hand, and thus ensure that only what was pleasing to her should find place here.

Then opening the Gospels, my eyes fell on these words: "Jesus, going up into a mountain, called unto Him whom He would Himself." (Mark 3:13).

They threw a clear light upon the mystery of my vocation and of my entire life, and above all upon the favors which our Lord has granted to my soul. He does not call those who are worthy, but those whom He will. As St. Paul says: "God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." (cf. Romans 9:15-16).

I often asked myself why God had preferences, why all souls did not receive an equal measure of grace. I was filled with wonder when I saw extraordinary favors showered on great sinners like St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Mary Magdalen, and many others, whom He forced, so to speak, to receive His grace. In reading the lives of the Saints I was surprised to see that there were certain privileged souls, whom Our Lord favoured from the cradle to the grave, allowing no obstacle in their path which might keep them from mounting towards Him, permitting no sin to soil the spotless brightness of their baptismal robe. And again it puzzled me why so many poor savages should die without having even heard the name of God.

Our Lord has deigned to explain this mystery to me. He showed me the book of nature, and I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy. I understood that if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would lose its springtide beauty, and the fields would no longer be enameled with lovely hues. And so it is in the world of souls, Our Lord's living garden. He has been pleased to create great Saints, who may be compared to the lily and the rose, but He has also created lesser ones, who must be content to be daisies or simple violets flowering at His Feet, and whose mission it is to gladden His Divine Eyes when He deigns to look down on them. And the more gladly they do His Will the greater is their perfection.

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[4] This statue twice appeared as if endowed with life, in order to enlighten and console Mme. Martin, mother of Thérèse. A like favor was granted to Thérèse herself, as will be seen in the course of the narrative.

I understood this also, that God's Love is made manifest as well in a simple soul which does not resist His grace as in one more highly endowed. In fact, the characteristic of love being self-abasement, if all souls resembled the holy Doctors who have illuminated the Church, it seems that God in coming to them would not stoop low enough. But He has created the little child, who knows nothing and can but utter feeble cries, and the poor savage who has only the natural law to guide him, and it is to their hearts that He deigns to stoop. These are the field flowers whose simplicity charms Him; and by His condescension to them Our Savior shows His infinite greatness. As the sun shines both on the cedar and on the floweret, so the Divine Sun illumines every soul, great and small, and all correspond to His care—just as in nature the seasons are so disposed that on the appointed day the humblest daisy shall unfold its petals.

You will wonder, dear Mother, to what all this is leading, for till now I have said nothing that sounds like the story of my life; but did you not tell me to write quite freely whatever came into my mind? So, it will not be my life properly speaking, that you will find in these pages, but my thoughts about the graces which it has pleased Our Lord to bestow on me.

I am now at a time of life when I can look back on the past, for my soul has been refined in the crucible of interior and exterior trials. Now, like a flower after the storm, I can raise my head and see that the words of the Psalm are realized in me: "The Lord is my Shepherd and J shall want nothing. He has set me in a place of pasture. He has brought me up on the water of refreshment. He has converted my soul. He has led me on the paths of justice for His own Name's sake. For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils for Thou art with me." (cf. Psalms 23).

Yes, to me Our Lord has always been: "compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy." (cf. Psalms 103:8).

And so it gives me great joy, dear Mother, to come to you and sing His unspeakable mercies. It is for you alone that I write the story of the little flower gathered by Jesus. This thought will help me to speak freely, without troubling either about style or about the many digressions that I shall make; for a Mother's heart always understands her child, even when it can only lisp, and so I am sure of being understood and my meaning appreciated.

If a little flower could speak, it seems to me that it would tell us quite simply all that God has done for it, without hiding any of its gifts. It would not, under the pretext of humility, say that it was not pretty, or that it had not a sweet scent, that the sun had withered its petals, or the storm bruised its stem, if it knew that such were not the case.

The Little Flower, that now tells her tale, rejoices in having to publish the wholly undeserved favours bestowed upon her by Our Lord. She knows that she had nothing in herself worthy of attracting Him: His Mercy alone showered blessings on her. He allowed her to grow in holy soil enriched with the odor of purity, and preceded by eight lilies of shining whiteness. In His Love He willed to preserve her from the poisoned breath of the world—hardly had her petals unfolded when this good Master transplanted her to the mountain of Carmel, Our Lady's chosen garden.

And now, dear Mother, having summed up in a few words all that God's goodness has done for me, I will relate in detail the story of my childhood. I know that, though to others it may seem wearisome, your motherly heart will find pleasure in it. In the story of my soul, up to the time of my entry into the Carmel, there are three clearly marked periods: the first, in spite of its shortness, is by no means the least rich in memories.

It extends from the dawn of reason to the death of my dearly loved Mother; in other words, till I was four years and eight months old. God, in His goodness, did me the favour of awakening my intelligence very early, and He has imprinted the recollections of my childhood so deeply in my memory that past events seem to have happened but yesterday. Without doubt He wished to make me know and appreciate the Mother He had given me. Alas! His Divine Hand soon took her from me to crown her in Heaven.

All my life it has pleased Him to surround me with affection. My first recollections are of loving smiles and tender caresses; but if He made others love me so much, He made me love them too, for I was of an affectionate nature.

You can hardly imagine how much I loved my Father and Mother, and, being very demonstrative, I showed my love in a thousand little ways, though the means I employed make me smile now when I think of them.

Dear Mother, you have given me the letters which my Mother wrote at this time to Pauline, who was at school at the Visitation Convent at Le Mans. I remember perfectly the events they refer to, but it will be easier for me simply to quote some passages, though these charming letters, inspired by a Mother's love, are too often full of my praises.

In proof of what I have said about my way of showing affection for my parents, here is an example: "Baby is the dearest little rogue; she comes to kiss me, and at the same time wishes me to die. 'Oh, how I wish you would die, dear Mamma,' she said, and when she was scolded she was quite astonished, and answered: 'But I want you to go to Heaven, and you say we must die to go there'; and in her outbursts of affection for her Father she wishes him to die too. The dear little thing will hardly leave me, she follows me everywhere, but likes going into the garden best; when I am not there she refuses to stay, and cries so much that they are obliged to bring her back. She will not even go upstairs alone without calling me at each step, ' Mamma! Mamma!' and if I forget to answer 'Yes, darling!' she waits where she is, and will not move."

I was nearly three years old when my Mother wrote: "Little Thérèse asked me the other day if she would go to Heaven. 'Yes, if you are good,' I told her. 'Oh, Mamma,' she answered,' then if I am not good, shall I go to Hell? Well, I know what I will do---I shall fly to you in Heaven, and you will hold me tight in your arms, and how could God take me away then?' I saw that she was convinced that God could do nothing to her if she hid herself in my arms."

"Marie loves her little sister very much; indeed she is a child who delights us all. She is extraordinarily outspoken, and it is charming to see her run after me to confess her childish faults: 'Mamma, I have pushed Céline; I slipped her once, but I'll not do it again.' The moment she has done anything mischievous, everyone must know. Yesterday, without meaning to do so, she tore off a small piece of wall paper; you would have been sorry for her—she wanted to tell her father immediately. When he came home four hours later, everyone else had forgotten about it, but she ran at once to Marie saying: 'Tell Papa that I tore the paper.' She waited there like a criminal for sentence; but she thinks she is more easily forgiven if she accuses herself."

Papa's name fills me with many happy memories. Mamma laughingly said he always did whatever I wanted, but he answered: "Well, why not? She is the Queen!" Then he would lift me on to his shoulder, and caress me in all sorts of ways. Yet I cannot say that he spoilt me. I remember one day while I was swinging he called out as he passed: "Come and kiss

me, little Queen." Contrary to my usual custom, I would not stir, and answered pertly: "You must come for it, Papa." He refused quite rightly, and went away. Marie was there and scolded me, saying: "How naughty to answer Papa like that!" Her reproof took effect; I got off the swing at once, and the whole house resounded with my cries. I hurried upstairs, not waiting this time to call Mamma at each step; my one thought was to find Papa and make my peace with him. I need not tell you that this was soon done.

I could not bear to think I had grieved my beloved parents, and I acknowledged my faults instantly, as this little anecdote, related by my Mother, will show: "One morning before going downstairs I wanted to kiss Thérèse; she seemed to be fast asleep, and I did not like to wake her, but Marie said: 'Mamma, I am sure she is only pretending.' So I bent down to kiss her forehead, and immediately she hid herself under the clothes, saying in the tone of a spoilt child: 'I don't want anyone to look at me.' I was not pleased with her, and told her so. A minute or two afterwards I heard her crying, and was surprised to see her by my side. She had got out of her cot by herself, and had come downstairs with bare feet, stumbling over her long nightdress. Her little face was wet with tears: 'Mamma,' she said, throwing herself on my knee, 'I am sorry for being naughty—forgive me!' Pardon was quickly granted; I took the little angel in my arms and pressed her to my heart, smothering her with kisses."

I remember also my great affection for my eldest sister Marie, who had just left school. Without seeming to do so, I took in all that I saw and heard, and I think that I reflected on things then as I do now. I listened attentively while she taught Céline, and was very good and obedient, so as to obtain the privilege of being allowed in the room during lessons. She gave me many trifling presents which pleased me greatly. I was proud of my two big sisters; but as Pauline seemed so far away from us, I thought of her all day long. When I was only just learning to talk, and Mamma asked: "What are you thinking about?" my answer invariably was: "Pauline." Sometimes I heard people saying that Pauline would be a nun, and, without quite knowing what it meant, I thought: "I will be a nun too." This is one of my first recollections, and I have never changed my mind; so it was the example of this beloved sister which, from the age of two, drew me to the Divine Spouse of Virgins. My dearest Mother, what tender memories of Pauline I could confide to you here! But it would take me too long.

Léonie had also a very warm place in my heart; she loved me very much, and her love was returned. In the evening when she came home from school she used to take care of me while the others went out, and it seems to me I can still hear the sweet songs she sang to put me to sleep. I remember perfectly the day of her First Communion, and I remember also her companion, the poor child whom my Mother dressed, according to the touching custom of the well-to-do families in Alençon. This child did not leave Léonie for an instant on that happy day, and in the evening at the grand dinner she sat in the place of honor. Alas! I was too small to stay up for this feast, but I shared in it a little, thanks to Papa's goodness, for he came himself to bring his little Queen a piece of the iced cake.

The only one now left to speak of is Céline, the companion of my childhood. My memories of her are so many that I do not know which to choose. We understood each other perfectly, but I was much more forward and lively, and far less ingenuous. Here is a letter which will show you, dear Mother, how sweet was Céline, and how naughty Thérèse. I was then nearly three years old, and Céline six and a half: "Céline is naturally inclined to

be good; as to the little puss, Thérèse, one cannot tell how she will turn out, she is so young and heedless. She is a very intelligent child, but has not nearly so sweet a disposition as her sister, and her stubbornness is almost unconquerable. When she has said 'No,' nothing will make her change; one could leave her all day in the cellar without getting her to say 'Yes.' She would sooner sleep there."

I had another fault also, of which my Mother did not speak in her letters: it was sell-love. Here are two instances: One day, no doubt wishing to see how far my pride would go, she smiled and said to me, "Thérèse, if you will kiss the ground I will give you a halfpenny." In those days a halfpenny was a fortune, and in order to gain it I had not far to stoop, for I was so tiny there was not much distance between me and the ground; but my pride was up in arms, and holding myself very erect, I said, **"** No, thank you. Mamma, I would rather go without it."

Another time we were going into the country to see some friends. Mamma told Marie to put on my prettiest frock, but not to let me have bare arms. I did not say a word, and appeared as indifferent as children of that age should be, but I said to myself, "I should have looked much prettier with bare arms."

With such a disposition, I feel sure that had I been brought up by careless parents I should have become very wicked, and perhaps have lost my soul. But Jesus watched over His little Spouse, and turned even her faults to advantage, for, being checked early in life, they became a means of leading her towards perfection. For instance, as I had great self-love and an innate love of good as well, it was enough to tell me once: "You must not do that," and I never wanted to do it again. Having only good example before my eyes, I naturally wished to follow it, and I see with pleasure in my Mother's letters that as I grew older I began to be a greater comfort. This is what she writes in 1876: "Even Thérèse is anxious to make sacrifices. Marie has given her little sisters a string of beads on purpose to count their acts of self-denial. They have really spiritual, but very amusing, conversations together. Céline said the other day: 'How can God be in such a tiny Host?' Thérèse answered: 'That is not strange, because God is Almighty!' 'And what does Almighty mean?' 'It means that He can do whatever He likes.'

"But it is more amusing still to see Thérèse put her hand in her pocket, time after time, to pull a bead along the string, whenever she makes a little sacrifice. The children are inseparable, and are quite sufficient company for one another. Nurse has given Thérèse two bantams [small domestic fowl], and every day after dinner she and Céline sit by the fire and play with them.

"One morning Thérèse got out of her cot and climbed into Céline's. The nurse went to fetch her to be dressed, and, when at last she found her, the little thing said, hugging her sister very hard: 'Oh, Louise! leave me here, don't you see that we are like the little white bantams, we can't be separated from one another.' "

It is quite true that I could not be separated from Céline; I would rather leave my dessert unfinished at table than let her go without me, and I would get down from my high chair when she did, and off we went to play together. On Sundays, as I was still too small to go to the long services, Mamma stayed at home to take care of me. I was always very good, walking about on tip-toe; but as soon as I heard the door open there was a tremendous outburst of joy—I threw myself on my dear little sister, exclaiming: "Oh, Céline! give me the blessed bread, quick!"' One day she had not brought any—what was to be done? I could

not do without it, for I called this little feast my Mass. A bright idea struck me: "You have no blessed bread!—make some." Céline immediately opened the cupboard, took out the bread, cut a tiny bit off, and after saying a Hail Mary quite solemnly over it, triumphantly presented it to me; and I, making the sign of the Cross, ate it with devotion, fancying it tasted exactly like the real blessed bread. [5]

One day Léonie, thinking no doubt that she was too big to play with dolls, brought us a basket filled with clothes, pretty pieces of stuff, and other trifles on which her doll was hid: "Here, dears," she said, "choose whatever you like." Céline looked at it, and took a woolen ball. After thinking about it for a minute, I put out my hand saying: "I choose everything," and I carried off both doll and basket without more ado.

This childish incident was a forecast, so to speak, of my whole life. Later on, when the way of perfection was opened out before me, I realized that in order to become a Saint one must suffer much, always seek the most perfect path, and forget oneself. I also understood that there are many degrees of holiness, that each soul is free to respond to the calls of Our Lord, to do much or little for His Love—in a word, to choose amongst the sacrifices He asks. And then also, as in the days of my childhood, I cried out: "My God, I choose everything, I will not be a Saint by halves, I am not afraid of suffering for Thee, I only fear one thing, and that is to do my own will. Accept the offering of my will, for I choose all that Thou willest."

But, dear Mother, I am forgetting myself—I must not tell you yet of my girlhood, I am still speaking of the baby of three and four years old.

I remember a dream I had at that age which impressed itself very deeply on my memory. I thought I was walking alone in the garden when, suddenly, I saw near the arbor two hideous little devils dancing with surprising agility on a barrel of lime, in spite of the heavy irons attached to their feet. At first they cast fiery glances at me; then, as though suddenly terrified, I saw them, in the twinkling of an eye, throw themselves down to the bottom of the barrel, from which they came out somehow, only to run and hide themselves in the laundry which opened into the garden. Finding them such cowards, I wanted to know what they were going to do, and, overcoming my fears, I went to the window. The wretched little creatures were there, running about on the tables, not knowing how to hide themselves from my gaze. From time to time they came nearer, peering through the windows with an uneasy air, then, seeing that I was still there, they began to run about again looking quite desperate. Of course this dream was nothing extraordinary; yet I think Our Lord made use of it to show me that a soul in the state of grace has nothing to fear from the devil, who is a coward, and will even fly from the gaze of a little child.

Dear Mother, how happy I was at that age! I was beginning to enjoy life, and goodness itself seemed full of charms. Probably my character was the same as it is now, for even then I had great self-command, and made a practice of never complaining when my things were taken; even if I was unjustly accused, I preferred to keep silence. There was no merit in this, for I did it naturally.

How quickly those sunny years of my childhood passed away, and what tender memories they have imprinted on my mind! I remember the Sunday walks when my dear Mother

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[5] The custom still prevails In some parts of France of blessing bread at the Offertory of the Mass and then distributing it to the faithful. It is known as *pain bénit.* This blessing only takes place at the Parochial Mass.

always accompanied us; and I can still feel the impression made on my childish heart at the sight of the fields bright with cornflowers, poppies, and marguerites. Even at that age I loved far-stretching views, sunlit spaces and stately trees; in a word, all nature charmed me and lifted up my soul to Heaven.

Often, during these walks, we met poor people. I was always chosen to give them an alms, which made me feel very happy. Sometimes, my dear Father, knowing the way was too long for his little Queen, took me home. This was a cause of grief, and to console me Céline would fill her basket with daisies, and give them to me on her return. Truly everything on earth smiled on me; I found flowers strewn at every step, and my naturally happy disposition helped to make life bright. But a new era was about to dawn.

I was to be the Spouse of Our Lord at such an early age that it was necessary I should suffer from my childhood. As the early spring flowers begin to come up under the snow and open at the first rays of the sun, so the Little Flower whose story I am writing had to pass through the winter of trial and to have her tender cup filled with the dew of tears.

Chapter 2

A Catholic Household

All the details of my Mother's illness are still fresh in my mind. I remember especially her last weeks on earth, when Céline and I felt like poor little exiles. Every morning a friend came to fetch us, and we spent the day with her. Once, we had not had time to say our prayers before starting, and on the way my little sister whispered: "Must we tell her that we have not said our prayers?" "Yes," I answered. So, very timidly, Céline confided our secret to her, and she exclaimed: "Well, well, children, you shall say them." Then she took us to a large room, and left us there. Céline looked at me in amazement. I was equally astonished, and exclaimed: "This is not like Mamma, she always said our prayers with us." During the day, in spite of all efforts to amuse us, the thought of our dear Mother was constantly in our minds. I remember once, when my sister had an apricot given to her, she leant towards me and said: "We will not eat it, I will give it to Mamma." Alas! our beloved Mother was now too ill to eat any earthly fruit; she would never more be satisfied but by the glory of Heaven. There she would drink of the mysterious wine which Jesus, at His Last Supper, promised to share with us in the Kingdom of His Father.

The touching ceremony of Extreme Unction made a deep impression on me. I can still see the place where I knelt, and hear my poor Father's sobs.

My dear Mother died on August 28, 1877, in her forty-sixth year. The day after her death my Father took me in his arms and said: "Come and kiss your dear Mother for the last time." Without saying a word, I put my lips to her icy forehead. I do not remember having cried much, and I did not talk to anyone of all that filled my heart; I looked and listened in silence, and I saw many things they would have hidden from me. Once I found myself close to the coffin in the passage. I stood looking at it for a long time; I had never seen one before, but I knew what it was. I was so small that I had to lift up my head to see its whole length, and it seemed to me very big and very sad.

Fifteen years later I was again standing by another coffin, that of our holy Mother Genevieve,[6] and I was carried back to the days of my childhood. Memories crowded upon me; it was the same little Thérèse who looked at it, but she had grown, and the coffin seemed small. She had not to lift up her head to it, now she only raised her eyes to contemplate Heaven which seemed to her very full of joy, for trials had matured and strengthened her soul, so that nothing on earth could make her grieve.

Our Lord did not leave me wholly an orphan; on the day of my Mother's funeral He gave me another mother, and allowed me to choose her freely. We were all five together, looking at one another sadly, when our nurse, overcome with emotion, said, tuning to Céline and to me: "Poor little dears, you no longer have a Mother." Then Céline threw herself into Marie's arms, crying: "Well, you will be my Mother now." I was so

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[6] This holy nun had bees professed at the Carmel of Poitiers, and was sent from there to make the foundation at Lisieux in 1838. Her memory is held in benediction in both these convents; in the sight of God she constantly practiced the most heroic virtue, and on December 5, 1891, crowned a life of good works by a holy death. She was then eighty-six year of age.

accustomed to imitate Céline that I should undoubtedly have followed her example, but I feared Pauline would be sad and feel herself left out if she too had not a little daughter. So, with a loving look, I hid my face on her breast saying in my turn: "And Pauline will be my Mother."

That day, as I have said, began the second period of my life. It was the most sorrowful of all, especially after Pauline, my second Mother, entered the Carmel; and it lasted from the time I was four years old until I was fourteen, when I recovered much of my childish gaiety, even though I understood more fully the serious side of life.

I must tell you that after my Mother's death my naturally happy disposition completely changed. Instead of being lively and demonstrative as I had been, I became timid, shy, and extremely sensitive; a look was enough to make me burst into tears. I could not bear to be noticed or to meet strangers, and was only at ease in my own family circle. There I was always cherished with the most loving care; my Father's affectionate heart seemed endowed with a mother's love, and my sisters were no less tender and devoted. If Our Lord had not lavished so much love and sunshine on His Little Flower, she never could have become acclimatized to this earth. Still too weak to bear the storm, she needed warmth, refreshing dew, and soft breezes, and these gifts were never wanting to her, even in the chilling season of trials.

Soon after my Mother's death, Papa made up his mind to leave Alençon and live at Lisieux, so that we might be near our uncle, my Mother's brother. He made this sacrifice in order that my young sisters should have the benefit of their aunt's guidance in their new life, and that she might act as a mother towards them. I did not feel any grief at leaving my native town: children love change and anything out of the common, and so I was pleased to come to Lisieux. I remember the journey quite well, and our arrival in the evening at my uncle's house, and I can still see my little cousins, Jeanne and Maria waiting on the doorstep with my aunt. How touching was the affection all these dear ones showed us!

The next day they took us to our new home, Les Buissonnets,[7] situated in a quiet part of the town. I was charmed with the house my Father had taken. The large upper window from which there was an extensive view, the flower garden in front, and the kitchen garden at the back—all these seemed delightfully new to my childish mind; and this happy home became the scene of many joys and of family gatherings which I can never forget. Elsewhere, as I said before, I felt an exile, I cried and fretted for my Mother; but here my little heart expanded, and I smiled on life once more.

When I woke there were my sisters ready to caress me, and I said my prayers kneeling between them. Then Pauline gave me my reading lesson, and I remember that "Heaven" was the first word I could read alone. When lessons were over I went upstairs, where Papa was generally to be found, and how pleased I was when I had good marks to show. Every afternoon I went out for a walk with him, and we paid a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in one or other of the Churches. It was in this way that I first saw the Chapel of the Carmel: "Look, little Queen," Papa said to me, "behind that big grating there are holy nuns who are always praying to Almighty God." Little did I think that nine years later I should be amongst them, that in this blessed Carmel I should receive so many graces.

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[7] This house, an object of deep interest to the clients of Saint Thérèse, is much frequented by pilgrims to Lisieux.

On returning home I learnt my lessons, and then spent the rest of the day playing in the garden near Papa. I never cared for dolls, but one of my favorite amusements was making colored mixtures with seeds and the bark of trees. If the colors were pretty, I would promptly offer them to Papa in a little cup and entice him to taste them; then my dearest Father would leave his work and smilingly pretend to drink. I was very fond of flowers, and amused myself by making little altars in holes which I happened to find in the middle of my garden wall. When finished I would run and call Papa, and he seemed delighted with them. I should never stop if I told you of the thousand and one incidents of this kind that I can remember. How shall I make you understand the love that my Father lavished on his little Queen!

Those were specially happy days for me when I went fishing with my dear "King," as I used to call him. Sometimes I tried my hand with a small rod of my own, but generally I preferred to sit on the grass some distance away. Then my reflections became really deep, and, without knowing what meditation meant, my soul was absorbed in prayer. Far-off sounds reached me, the murmuring of the wind, sometimes a few uncertain notes of music from a military band in the town a long way off; all this imparted a touch of melancholy to my thoughts. Earth seemed a place of exile, and I dreamed of Heaven.

The afternoon passed quickly away, and it was soon time to go home, but before packing up I would eat the provisions I had brought in a small basket. Somehow the slice of bread and jam, prepared by my sisters, looked different; they had seemed so tempting, and now they looked stale and uninviting. Even such a trifle as this made the earth seem sadder, and I realized that only in Heaven will there be unclouded joy.

Speaking of clouds, I remember how one day when we were out, the blue sky became overcast and a storm came on, accompanied by vivid lightning. I looked round on every side, so as to lose nothing of the grand sight. A thunderbolt fell in a field close by, and, far from feeling the least bit afraid, I was delighted—it seemed that God was so near. Papa was not so pleased, and put an end to my reverie, for already the tall grass and daisies, taller than I, were sparkling with rain-drops, and we had to cross several fields to reach the road. In spite of his fishing tackle, he carried me in his arms while I looked down on the beautiful jeweled drops, almost sorry that I could not be drenched by them.

I do not think I have told you that in our daily walks at Lisieux, as in Alençon, I often used to give alms to the beggars. One day we came upon a poor old man who dragged himself painfully along on crutches. I went up to give him a penny. He looked sadly at me for a long time, and then, shaking his head with a sorrowful smile, he refused my alms. I cannot tell you what I felt; I had wished to help and comfort him, and instead of that, I had, perhaps, hurt him and caused him pain. He must have guessed my thought, for I saw him turn round and smile at me when we were some way off.

Just then Papa bought me a cake. I wished very much to run after the old man and give it to him, for I thought: "Well, he did not want money, but I am sure he would like to have a cake." I do not know what held me back, and I felt so sad I could hardly keep from crying; then I remembered having heard that one obtains all the favours asked for on one's First Communion Day. This thought consoled me immediately, and though I was only six years old at the time, I said to myself: "I will pray for my poor old man on the day of my First Communion." Five years later I faithfully kept my resolution. I have always thought that my childish prayer for this suffering member of Christ has been blessed and rewarded.

As I grew older my love of God grew more and more. I often offered my heart to Him, using the words my Mother had taught me, and I tried very hard to please Him in all my actions, taking great care never to offend Him. And yet one day I committed a fault of which I must tell you here—it gives me a good opportunity of humbling myself, though I believe I have grieved over it with perfect contrition.

It was the month of May, 1878. My sisters decided that I was too small to go to the May devotions every evening, so I stayed at home with the nurse and said my prayers with her before the little altar which I had arranged according to my own taste. Everything was small—candlesticks, vases, and the rest; two wax vestas were quite sufficient to light it up properly. Sometimes Victoire, the maid, gave me some little bits of real candle, but not often.

One evening, when we went to our prayers, I said to her: "Will you begin the Memorare? I am going to light the candles." She tried to begin, and then looked at me and burst out laughing. Seeing my precious vestas burning quickly away, I begged her once more to say the Memorare. Again there was silence, broken only by bursts of laughter. All my natural good temper deserted me. I got up feeling dreadfully angry, and, stamping my foot furiously, I cried out: "Victoire, you naughty girl!" She stopped laughing at once, and looked at me in utter astonishment, then showed me—too late—the surprise she had in store hidden under her apron—two pieces of candle. My tears of anger were soon changed into tears of sorrow; I was very much ashamed and grieved, and made a firm resolution never to act in such a way again.

Shortly after this I made my first confession.[8] It is a very sweet memory. Pauline had warned me: "Thérèse, darling, it is not to a man but to God Himself that you are going to tell your sins." I was so persuaded of this that I asked her quite seriously if I should not tell Father Ducellier that I loved him "with my whole heart," as it was really God I was going to speak to in his person.

Well instructed as to what I was to do, I entered the confessional, and turning round to the priest, so as to see him better, I made my confession and received absolution in a spirit of lively faith—my sister having assured me that at this solemn moment the tears of the Holy Child Jesus would purify my soul. I remember well that he exhorted me above all to a tender devotion towards Our Lady, and I promised to redouble my love for her who already filled so large a place in my heart. Then I passed him my Rosary to be blessed, and came out of the Confessional more joyful and lighthearted than I had ever felt before. It was evening, and as soon as I got to a street lamp I stopped and took the newly blessed Rosary out of my pocket, turning it over and over. "What are you looking at, Thérèse, dear?" asked Pauline. "I am seeing what a blessed Rosary looks like." This childish answer amused my sisters very much. I was deeply impressed by the graces I had received, and wished to go to confession again for all the big feasts!, for these confessions filled me with joy. The feasts! What precious memories these simple words bring to me. I loved them; and my sisters knew so well how to explain the mysteries hidden in each one. Those days of earth became days of Heaven. Above all I loved the procession of the Blessed Sacrament: what a joy it was to strew flowers in God's path! But before scattering them on the ground I threw them

[8] This first confession was made in the beautiful church of St. Pierre, formerly the cathedral of Lisieux.

high in the air, and was never so happy as when I saw my rose-leaves touch the sacred Monstrance.

And if the great feasts came but seldom, each week brought one very dear to my heart, and that Sunday. What a glorious day! The Feast of God! The day of rest! First of all the whole family went to High Mass, and I remember that before the sermon we had to come down from our places, which were some way from the pulpit, and find seats in the nave. This was not always easy, but to little Thérèse and her Father everyone offered a place. My uncle was delighted when he saw us come down; he called me his "Sunbeam," and said that to see the venerable old man leading his little daughter by the hand was a sight which always filled him with joy. I never troubled myself if people looked at me, I was only occupied in listening attentively to the preacher. A sermon on the Passion of our Blessed Lord was the first I understood, and it touched me deeply. I was then five and a half, and after that time I was able to understand and appreciate all instructions. If St. Teresa was mentioned, my Father would bend down and whisper to me: "Listen attentively, little Queen, he is speaking of your holy patroness." I really did listen attentively, but I must own I looked at Papa more than at the preacher, for I read many things in his face. Sometimes his eyes were filled with tears which he strove in vain to keep back; and as he listened to the eternal truths he seemed no longer of this earth, his soul was absorbed in the thought of another world. Alas! many long and sorrowful years had to pass before Heaven was to be opened to him, and Our Lord with His Own Divine Hand was to wipe away the bitter tears of His faithful servant.

To go back to the description of our Sundays. This happy day which passed so quickly had also its touch of melancholy; my happiness was full till Compline, but after that a feeling of sadness took possession of me. I thought of the morrow when one had to begin again the daily life of work and lessons, and my heart, feeling like an exile on this earth, longed for the repose of Heaven—the never ending Sabbath of our true Home. Every Sunday my aunt invited us in turns to spend the evening with her. I was always glad when mine came, and it was a pleasure to listen to my uncle's conversation. His talk was serious, but it interested me, and he little knew that I paid such attention; but my joy was not unmixed with fear when he took me on his knee and sang "Bluebeard" in his deep voice.

About eight o'clock Papa would come to fetch me. I remember that I used to look up at the stars with inexpressible delight. Orion's belt fascinated me especially, for I saw in it a likeness to the letter "T." "Look, Papa," I would cry, "my name is written in Heaven!" Then, not wishing to see this dull earth any longer, I asked him to lead me, and with my head thrown back, I gazed unweariedly at the starry skies.

I could tell you much about our winter evenings at home. After a game of draughts my sisters read aloud Dom Guéranger's Liturgical Year, and then a few pages of some other interesting and instructive book. While this was going on I established myself on Papa's knee, and when the reading was done he used to sing soothing snatches of melody in his beautiful voice, as if to lull me to sleep, and I would lay my head on his breast while he rocked me gently to and fro.

Later on we went upstairs for night prayers, and there again my place was beside my beloved Father, and I had only to look at him to know how the Saints pray. Pauline put me to bed, and I invariably asked her: "Have I been good today? Is God pleased with me? Will the Angels watch over me?" The answer was always "Yes," otherwise I should have spent

the whole night in tears. After these questions my sisters kissed me, and little Thérèse was left alone in the dark.

I look on it as a real grace that from childhood I was taught to overcome my fears. Sometimes in the evening Pauline would send me to fetch something from a distant room; she would take no refusal, and she was quite right, for otherwise I should have become very nervous, whereas now it is difficult to frighten me. I wonder sometimes how my little Mother was able to bring me up with so much tenderness, and yet without spoiling me, for she did not pass over the least fault. It is true she never scolded me without cause, and I knew well she would never change her mind when once a thing was decided upon.

To this dearly loved sister I confided my most intimate thoughts; she cleared up all my doubts. One day I expressed surprise that God does not give an equal amount of glory to all the elect in Heaven—I was afraid that they would not all be quite happy. She sent me to fetch Papa's big tumbler, and put it beside my tiny thimble, then, filling both with water, she asked me which seemed the fuller. I replied that one was as full as the other—it was impossible to pour more water into either of them, for they could not hold it. In this way Pauline made it clear to me that in Heaven the least of the Blessed does not envy the happiness of the greatest; and so, by bringing the highest mysteries down to the level of my understanding, she gave my soul the food it needed.

Joyfully each year I welcomed the prize day Though I was the only competitor, justice was none the less strictly observed, and I never received rewards unless they were well merited. My heart used to beat with excitement when I heard the decisions, and in presence of the whole family received prizes from Papa's hands. It was to me like a picture of the Judgment Day!

Seeing Papa so cheerful, no suspicion of the terrible trials which awaited him crossed my mind; but one day God showed me, in an extraordinary vision, a vivid picture of the trouble to come. My Father was away on a journey, and could not return as early as usual. It was about two or three o'clock in the afternoon; the sun was shining brightly, and all the world seemed gay. I was alone at a window looking on to the kitchen garden, my mind full of cheerful thoughts, when I saw before me, in front of the wash house, a man dressed exactly like Papa, of the same height and appearance, but more bent and aged. I say aged, to describe his general appearance, for I did not see his face as his head was covered with a thick veil. He advanced slowly, with measured step, along my little garden; at that instant a feeling of supernatural fear seized me, and I called out loudly in a trembling voice: "Papa, Papa!" The mysterious person seemed not to hear, he continued his walk without even turning, and went towards a clump of firs which grew in the middle of the garden. I expected to see him reappear at the other side of the big trees, but the prophetic vision had vanished.

It was all over in a moment, but it was a moment which impressed itself so deeply on my memory that even now, after so many years, the remembrance of it is as vivid as the vision itself.

My sisters were all together in an adjoining room. Hearing me call "Papa!" they were frightened themselves, but Marie, hiding her feelings, ran to me and said: "Why are you calling Papa, when he is at Alençon?" I told her what I had seen, and to reassure me they said that Nurse must have covered her head with her apron on purpose to frighten me. Victoire, however, when questioned, declared she had not left the kitchen—besides, the

truth was too deeply impressed on my mind: I had seen a man, and that man was exactly like my Father. We all went to look behind the clump of trees, and, finding nothing, my sisters told me to think no more about it. Ah, that was not in my power! Often and often my imagination brought before me this mysterious vision, often and often I tried to raise the veil which hid its true meaning, and deep down in my heart I had a conviction that some day it would be fully revealed to me. And you know all, dear Mother. You know that it was really my Father whom God showed me, bent by age, and bearing on his venerable face and his white bead the symbol of his terrible trial.[9]

As the Adorable Face of Jesus was veiled during His Passion, so it was fitting that the face of His humble servant should be veiled during the days of his humiliation, in order that it might shine with greater brilliancy in Heaven. How I admire God's ways! He showed us this precious cross beforehand, as a father shows his children the glorious future he is preparing for them—a future which will bring them an inheritance of priceless treasures.

But a thought comes into my mind: "Why did God give this light to a child who, if she had understood it, would have died of grief?" "Why?" Here is one of those incomprehensible mysteries which we shall only understand in Heaven, where they will be the subject of our eternal admiration. My God, how good Thou art! How well dost Thou suit the trial to our strength!

At that time I had not courage even to think that Papa could die, without being terrified. One day he was standing on a high step-ladder, and as I was close by he called out: "Move away, little Queen; if I fall I shall crush you." Instantly I felt an inward shock, and, going still nearer to the ladder, I thought: "At least if Papa falls I shall not have the pain of seeing him die, for I shall die with him." I could never say how much I loved him. I admired everything he did. When he explained his ideas on serious matters, as if I were a big girl, I answered him naively: "It is quite certain, Papa, that if you spoke like that to the great men who govern the country they would take you and make you King. Then France would be happier than it has ever been; but you would be unhappy, because that is the lot of kings; besides you would no longer be my King alone, so I am glad that they do not know you."

When I was six or seven years old, I saw the sea for the first time. The sight made a deep impression on me, I could not take my eyes off it. Its majesty, and the roar of the waves, all spoke to my soul of the greatness and power of God. I remember, when we were on the beach, a man and woman looked at me for a long time, then, asking Papa if I was his child, they remarked that I was a very pretty little girl. Papa at once made a sign to them not to flatter me; I was delighted to hear what they said, for I did not think I was pretty. My sisters were most careful never to talk before me in such a way as to spoil my simplicity and childish innocence; and, because I believed so implicitly in them, I attached little importance to the admiration of these people and thought no more about it.

That evening at the hour when the sun seems to sink into the vast ocean, leaving behind it a trail of glory, I sat with Pauline on a bare rock, and gazed for long on this golden furrow which she told me was an image of grace illumining the way of faithful souls here below. Then I pictured my soul as a tiny barque, with a graceful white sail, in the midst of

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[9] It seems advisable, on account of the vague allusions which occur here and elsewhere, to state what happened to M. Louis Martin. At the age of sixty-six, having already had several partial attacks, he was struck with general paralysis, and his mind gave way altogether.

the furrow, and I resolved never to let it withdraw from the sight of Jesus, so that it might sail peacefully and quickly towards the Heavenly Shore.

Chapter 3

Pauline Enters The Carmel

I was eight and a half when Léonie left school, and I took her place at the Benedictine Abbey in Lisieux. The girls of my class were all older than myself; one of them was fourteen, and, though not clever, she knew how to impose on the little ones. Seeing me so young, nearly always first in class, and a favorite with all the nuns, she was jealous, and used to pay me out in a thousand ways. Naturally timid and sensitive, I did not know how to defend myself, and could only cry in silence. Céline and my elder sisters did not know of my grief, and, not being advanced enough in virtue to rise above these troubles, I suffered considerably.

Every evening I went home, and then my spirits rose. I would climb on to Papa's knee, telling him what marks I had, and his caresses made me forget all my troubles. With what delight I announced the result of my first essay, for I won the maximum number of marks. In reward I received a silver coin which I put in my money box for the poor, and nearly every Thursday I was able to increase the fund.

Indeed, to be spoilt was a real necessity for me. The Little Flower had need to strike its tender roots deeper and deeper into the dearly loved garden of home, for nowhere else could it find the nourishment it required. Thursday was a holiday, but it was not like the holidays I had under Pauline, which I generally spent upstairs with Papa. Not knowing how to play like other children, I felt myself a dull companion. I tried my best to do as the others did, but without success.

After Céline, who was, so to say, indispensable to me, I sought the company of my little cousin Marie, because she left me free to choose the games I liked best. We were already closely united in heart and will, as if God were showing us in advance how one day in the Carmel we should embrace the same religious life.[10]

Very often, at my uncle's house, we used to play at being two austere hermits, with only a poor hut, a little patch of corn, and a garden in which to grow a few vegetables. Our life was to be spent in continual contemplation, one praying while the other engaged in active duties. All was done with religious gravity and decorum. If we went out, the make-believe continued even in the street; the two hermits would say the Rosary, using their fingers to count on, so as not to display their devotion before those who might scoff. One day, however, the hermit Thérèse forgot herself—before eating a cake, given her for lunch, she made a large Sign of the Cross, and some worldly folk did not repress a smile.

We were so bent on always doing the same thing that sometimes we carried it too far. Endeavoring one evening, on our way home from school, to imitate the modest demeanor of the hermits, I said to Marie: "Lead me, I am going to shut my eyes." "So am I," she answered. Being on the pavement we were in no fear of vehicles, and for a short while all went well, and we enjoyed walking with our eyes shut; but presently we both fell over some

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[10] Marie Guérin entered the Carmel at Lisieux on August 15, 1895, and took the name of Sister Mary of the Eucharist. She died on April 14, 1905, aged thirty-four.

boxes standing at a shop door and knocked them down. The shopkeeper came out in a rage to replace them, but the would-be blind pair picked themselves up and ran off as fast as they could, with eyes wide open. Then the hermits had to listen to a well-deserved scolding from Jeanne, the maid, who seemed as vexed as the shopkeeper.

I have not yet told you how Céline and I altered when we came to Lisieux. She had now become the little romp, full of mischief, while Thérèse had turned into a very quiet little girl, far too much inclined to tears. I needed a champion, and who can say how courageously my dear little sister played that part. We used to enjoy making each other little presents, for, at that age, the simplicity of our hearts was unspoiled. Like the spring flowers they unfolded, glad to receive the morning dew, while the same soft breezes swayed their petals. Yes, our joys were mutual. I felt this especially on the happy day of Céline's First Communion; I was only seven years old, and had not yet begun school at the Abbey. How sweet is the remembrance of her preparation! Every evening during its last weeks my sisters talked to her of the great event. I listened, eager to prepare myself too, and my heart swelled with grief when I was told to go away because I was still too young. I thought that four years was not too long to spend in making ready to receive Our dear Lord. One evening I heard someone say to my happy little sister: "From the time of your First Communion you must begin an entirely new life." At once I made a resolution not to wait till the time of my First Communion, but to begin with Céline. During her retreat she remained as a boarder at the Abbey, and it seemed to me she was away a long time; but at last the happy day came. What a delightful impression it has left on my mind—it was like a foretaste of my own First Communion! How many graces I received that day! I look on it as one of the most beautiful of my life.

I have gone back a little in order to recall these happy memories; but now I must tell you of the mournful parting which crushed my heart when Our Lord took from me my little Mother whom I loved so dearly. I told her once that I would like to go away with her to a far-off desert; she replied that it was her wish too, but that she was waiting till I was big enough to set out. This impossible promise I took in earnest, and what was my grief when I heard Pauline talking to Marie about soon entering the Carmel! I did not know the Carmel; but I knew that she was leaving me to enter a convent, and that she would not wait for me.

How can I describe the anguish I suffered! In a flash I saw life spread out before me as it really is, full of sufferings and frequent partings, and I shed bitter tears. At that time I did not know the joy of sacrifice; I was weak—so weak that I look on it as a great grace that I was able to bear such a trial, one seemingly so much beyond my strength—and yet live. I shall never forget how tenderly my little Mother consoled me, while explaining the religious life. Then one evening, when I was thinking over the picture she had drawn, I felt that the Carmel was the desert where God wished me also to hide. I felt this so strongly that I had not the least doubt about it; nor was it a childish dream, but the certainty of a Divine Call. This impression, which I cannot properly describe, left me with a feeling of great inward peace.

Next day I confided my desires to Pauline. They seemed to her as a proof of God's Will, and she promised to take me soon to the Carmel, to see the Mother Prioress and to tell her my secret. This solemn visit was fixed for a certain Sunday, and great was my

embarrassment on hearing that my cousin Marie—who was still young enough to be allowed to see the Carmelites—was to come with us.[11]

I had to contrive a means of being alone with the Reverend Mother, and this is what I planned. I told Marie, that, as we were to have the great privilege of seeing her, we must be very good and polite, and tell her our little secrets, and, in order to do that, we must go out of the room in turns. Though she did not quite like it, because she had no secrets to confide, Marie took me at my word, and so I was able to be alone with you, dear Mother. You listened to my great disclosure, and believed in my vocation, but you told me that postulants were not received at the age of nine, and that I must wait till I was sixteen. In spite of my ardent desire to enter with Pauline and make my First Communion on her clothing day, I had to be resigned.

At last the 2nd of October came—a day of tears, but also of blessings, when Our Lord gathered the first of His flowers, the chosen flower who, later on, was to become the Mother of her sisters.[12] Whilst Papa, with my uncle and Marie, climbed the mountain of Carmel to offer his first sacrifice, my aunt took me to Mass, with my sisters and cousins. We were bathed in tears, and people gazed at us in astonishment when we entered the church, but that did not stop our crying. I even wondered how the sun could go on shining. Perhaps, dear Mother, you think I exaggerate my grief a little. I confess that this parting ought not to have upset me so much, but my soul was yet far from mature, and I had to pass through many trials before reaching the haven of peace, before tasting the delicious fruits of perfect love and of complete abandonment to God's Will.

In the afternoon of that October day, 1882, behind the grating of the Carme1, I saw my beloved Pauline, now become Sister Agnes of Jesus. Oh, how much I suffered in that parlor! As I am writing the story of my soul, it seems to me that I ought to tell you everything. Well, I acknowledge that I hardly counted the first pains of this parting, in comparison with those which followed. I, who had been accustomed to talk with my little Mother of all that was in my heart, could now scarcely snatch two or three minutes with her at the end of the family visits; even these short minutes were passed in tears, and I went away with my heart torn with grief.

I did not realize that it was impossible to give us each half an hour, and that of course Papa and Marie must have the largest share. I could not understand all this, and I said from the depths of my heart: "Pauline is lost to me."

This suffering so affected me that I soon became seriously ill. The illness was undoubtedly the work of the devil, who, in his fury at this first entry into the Carmel, tried to avenge himself on me for the great harm my family was to do him in the future. However, he little knew that the Queen of Heaven was watching faithfully over her Little Flower, that she was smiling upon it from on high, ready to still the tempest just when the delicate and fragile stalk was in danger of being broken once and for all. At the close of the year 1882, I began to suffer from constant headaches; they were bearable, however, and did not prevent me from continuing my studies. This lasted till the Easter of 1883. Just then Papa went to Paris with my elder sisters, and confided Céline and me to the care of our

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[11] With the Carmelites, the grating is only opened for near relatives and very young children.

[12] "Pauline" has several times been Prioress of the Carmel of Lisieux, and in 1909 again succeeded to that office on the death of the young and saintly Mother Mary of St. Angelus of the Child Jesus.

uncle and aunt. One evening I was alone with my uncle, and he talked so tenderly of my Mother and of bygone days that I was deeply moved and began to cry. My sensitiveness touched him too; he was surprised that one of my age should feel as I did. So he determined to do all he could to divert my mind during the holidays.

But God had decided otherwise. That very evening my headache became acute, and I was seized with a strange shivering which lasted all night. My aunt, like a real mother, never left me for a moment; all through my illness she lavished on me the most tender and devoted care. You may imagine my poor Father's grief when he returned from Paris to find me in this hopeless state; he thought I was going to die, but Our Lord might have said to him: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." (Jn 11:4).

Yes, God was glorified by means of this trial, by the wonderful resignation of my Father and sisters. And to Marie especially what suffering it brought, and how grateful I am to this dear sister! She seemed to divine my wants by instinct, for a mother's heart is more knowing than the science of the most skillful doctors.

And now Pauline's clothing day was drawing near; but, fearing to distress me, no one dared mention it in my presence, since it was taken for granted that I should not be well enough to be there. Deep down in my heart, however, I firmly believed that God would give me the consolation of seeing dear Pauline on that day. I was quite sure that this feast would be unclouded; I knew that Our Lord would not try His Spouse by depriving her of my presence, she had already suffered so much on account of my illness. And so it turned out. I was there, able to embrace my dear little Mother, to sit on her knee, and, hiding myself under her veil, to receive her loving caresses. I was able to feast my eyes upon her—she looked so lovely in her veil and mantle of white. Truly it was a day of happiness in the midst of heavy trials; but this day, or rather this hour, passed only too quickly, and soon we were in the carriage which was to take us away from the Carmel. On reaching home, I was made to lie down, though I did not feel at all tired; but next day I had a serious relapse, and became so ill that, humanly speaking, there was no hope of my recovery.

I do not know how to describe this extraordinary illness. I said things which I had never thought of; I acted as though I were forced to act in spite of myself; I seemed nearly always to be delirious; and yet I feel certain that I was never, for a minute, deprived of my reason. Sometimes I remained in a state of extreme exhaustion for hours together, unable to make the least movement, and yet, in spite of this extraordinary torpor, hearing the least whisper. I remember it still. And what fears the devil inspired! I was afraid of everything; my bed seemed to be surrounded by frightful precipices; nails in the wall took the terrifying appearance of long fingers, shriveled and blackened with fire, making me cry out in terror. One day, while Papa stood looking at me in silence, the hat in his hand was suddenly transformed into some horrible shape, and I was so frightened that he went away sobbing.

But if God allowed the devil to approach me in this open way, Angels too were sent to console and strengthen me. Marie never left me, and never showed the least trace of weariness in spite of all the trouble I gave her—for I could not rest when she was away. During meals, when Victoire took care of me, I never ceased calling tearfully, "Marie! Marie!" When she wanted to go out, it was only if she were going to Mass or to see Pauline that I kept quiet. As for Léonie and my little Céline, they could not do enough for me. On Sundays they shut themselves up for hours with a poor child who seemed almost to have lost her reason. My own dear sisters, how much I made you suffer! My uncle and aunt were

also devoted to me. My aunt came to see me every day, and brought me many little gifts. I could never tell you how my love for these dear ones increased during this illness. I understood better than ever what Papa had so often told us: "Always remember, children, that your uncle and aunt have devoted themselves to you in a way that is quite exceptional." In his old age he experienced this himself, and now he must bless and protect those who lavished on him such affectionate care.[13]

When my sufferings grew less, my great delight was to weave garlands of daisies and forget-me-nots for Our Lady's statue. We were in the beautiful month of May, when all nature is clothed with the flowers of spring; the Little Flower alone drooped, and seemed as though it had withered for ever. Yet she too had a shining Sun, the miraculous statue of the Queen of Heaven. How often did not the Little Flower turn towards this glorious Sun!

One day Papa came into my room in the deepest distress, and I watched him go up to Marie and give her some money, bidding her write to Paris, and have a novena of Masses said at the shrine of Our Lady of Victories,[14] to obtain the cure of his poor little Queen. How touching were his faith and love! How much I longed to get up and tell him I was cured! Alas! my wishes could not work a miracle, and it needed one to restore me to health. Yes, it needed a great miracle, and this was wrought by Our Lady of Victories herself.

One Sunday, during the novena, Marie went into the garden, leaving me with Léonie, who was reading by the window. After a short time I began to call: "Marie! Marie!" very softly. Léonie, accustomed to hear me fret like this, took no notice, so I called louder, until Marie came back to me. I saw her come into the room quite well, but, for the first time, I failed to recognize her. I looked all round and glanced anxiously into the garden, still calling: "Marie! Marie!" Her anguish was perhaps greater than mine, and that was unutterable. At last, after many fruitless efforts to make me recognize her, she whispered a few words to Léonie, and went away pale and trembling. Léonie presently carried me to the window. There I saw the garden, and Marie walking up and down, but still I did not recognize her; she came forward, smiling, and held out her arms to me calling tenderly: "Thérèse, dear little Thérèse!" This last effort failing, she came in again and knelt in tears at the foot of my bed; turning towards the statue of Our Lady, she entreated her with the fervour of a mother who begs the life of her child and will not be refused. Léonie and Céline joined her, and that cry of faith forced the gates of Heaven. I too, finding no help on earth and nearly dead with pain, turned to my Heavenly Mother, begging her from the bottom of my heart to have pity on me. Suddenly the statue Seemed to come to life and grow beautiful, with a divine beauty that I shall never find words to describe. The expression of Our Lady's face was ineffably sweet, tender, and compassionate; but what touched me to the very depths of my soul was her gracious smile. Then, all my pain vanished, two big tears started to my eyes and fell silently. . . .

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[13] Mme. Guérin died holily on February 13, 1900, aged fifty-two. During her illness Thérèse assisted her in an extraordinary way, several times making her presence felt. Monsieur Guérin, having for many years used his pen in defense of the Church, and his fortune in the support of good works, died a beautiful death, on September 28, 1909, in his sixty-ninth year.

[14] It was in this small church—once deserted and today perhaps the most frequented in Paris—that the saintly Abbé was inspired by Our Lady, in 1836, to establish the Confraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners.

They were indeed tears of unmixed heavenly joy. "Our Blessed Lady has come to me, she has smiled at me. How happy I am, but I shall tell no one, or my happiness will leave me!" Such were my thoughts. Looking round, I recognized Marie; she seemed very much overcome, and looked lovingly at me, as though she guessed that I had just received a great grace.

Indeed her prayers had gained me this unspeakable favour—a smile from the Blessed Virgin! When she saw me with my eves fixed on the statue, she said to herself: "Thérèse is cured!" And it was true. The Little Flower had come to life again—a bright ray from its glorious Sun had warmed and set it free for ever from its cruel enemy. "The dark winter is past, the rain is over and gone," (Song of Solomon 2:11) and Our Lady's Little Flower gathered such strength that five years later it opened wide its petals on the fertile mountain of Carmel.

As I said before, Marie was convinced that Our Blessed Lady, while restoring my bodily health, had granted me some hidden grace. So, when I was alone with her, I could not resist her tender and pressing inquiries. I was so astonished to find my secret already known, without my having said a word, that I told her everything. Alas! as I had foreseen, my joy was turned into bitterness. For four years the remembrance of this grace was a cause of real pain to me, and it was only in the blessed sanctuary of Our Lady of Victories, at my Mother's feet, that I once again found peace. There it was restored to me in all its fullness, as I will tell you later.

This is how my joy was changed into sadness. When Marie had heard the childish, but perfectly sincere, account of the grace I had received, she begged my leave to tell them at the Carmel, and I did not like to refuse her. My first visit there after my illness was full of joy at seeing Pauline clothed in the habit of Our Lady of Carmel. It was a happy time for us both, we had so much to say, we had both suffered so much. My heart was so full that I could hardly speak.

You were there, dear Mother, and plainly showed your affection for me; I saw several other Sisters too, and you must remember how they questioned me about my cure. Some asked if Our Lady was holding the Infant Jesus in her arms, others if the Angels were with her, and so on. All these questions distressed and grieved me, and I could only make one answer: "Our Lady looked very beautiful; I saw her come towards me and smile." But noticing that the nuns thought something quite different had happened from what I had told them, I began to persuade myself that I had been guilty of an untruth.

If only I had kept my secret I should have kept my happiness also. But Our Lady allowed this trouble to befall me for the good of my soul; perhaps without it vanity would have crept into my heart, whereas now I was humbled, and I looked on myself with feelings of contempt. My God, Thou alone knowest all that I suffered!

Chapter 4
First Communion

While describing this visit to the Carmel, my thoughts are carried back to the first one which I paid after Pauline entered. On the morning of that happy day, I wondered what name would be given to me later on. I knew that there was already a Sister Teresa of Jesus; nevertheless, my beautiful name of Thérèse could not be taken from me. Suddenly I thought of the Child Jesus whom I loved so dearly, and I felt how much I should like to be called Teresa of the Child Jesus. I was careful not to tell you of my wish, dear Mother, yet you said to me, in the middle of our conversation: "When you come to us, little one, you will be called "Teresa of the Child Jesus." My joy was great indeed. This happy coincidence of thought seemed a special favor from the Holy Child.

So far I have not said anything about my love for pictures and books, and yet I owe some of the happiest and strongest impressions which have encouraged me in the practice of virtue to the beautiful pictures Pauline used to show me. Everything was forgotten while looking at them. For instance, "The Little Flower of the Divine Prisoner" suggested so many thoughts that I would remain gazing at it in a kind of ecstasy. I offered myself to Our Lord to be His Little Flower; I longed to console Him, to draw as near as possible to the Tabernacle, to be looked on, cared for, and gathered by Him.

As I was of no use at games, I should have preferred to spend all my time in reading. Happily for me, I had visible guardian angels to guide me in this matter; they chose books suitable to my age, which interested me and at the same time provided food for my thoughts and affections. I was only allowed a limited time for this favorite recreation, and it became an occasion of much self-sacrifice, for as soon as the time had elapsed I made it my duty to stop instantly, even in the middle of a most interesting passage.

As to the impressions produced on me by these books, I must frankly own that, in reading certain tales of chivalry, I did not always understand the realities of life. And so, in my admiration of the patriotic deeds of the heroines of France, especially of the Venerable Joan of Arc, I longed to do what they had done. About this tune I received what I have looked on as one of the greatest graces of my life, for, at that age, I was not favored with lights from Heaven, as I am now.

Our Lord made me understand that the only true glory is that which lasts for ever; and that to attain it there is no necessity to do brilliant deeds, but rather to hide from the eves of others, and even from oneself, so that "the left hand knows not what the right hand does." (cf. Mt 6:3). Then, as I reflected that I was born for great things, and sought the means to attain them, it was made known to me interiorly that my personal glory would never reveal itself before the eyes of men, but that it would consist in becoming a Saint.

This aspiration may very well appear rash, seeing how imperfect I was, and am, even now, after so many years of religious life; yet I still feel the same daring confidence that one day I shall become a great Saint. I am not trusting in my own merits, for I have none; but I trust in Him Who is Virtue and Holiness itself. It is He alone Who, pleased with my feeble efforts, will raise me to Himself, and, by clothing me with His merits, make me a Saint. At

that time I did not realize that to become one it is necessary to suffer a great deal; but God soon disclosed this secret to me by means of the trials I have related.

I must now continue my story where I left off. Three months after my cure Papa took me away for a change. It was a very pleasant time, and I began to see something of the world. All around me was joy and gladness; I was petted, made much of, admired—in fact, for a whole fortnight my path was strewn with flowers. The Wise Man is right when he says: "The bewitching of vanity overturneth the innocent mind." (Wisdom 4:12). At ten years of age the heart is easily fascinated, and I confess that in my case this kind of life had its charms. Alas! the world knows well how to combine its pleasures with the service of God. How little it thinks of death! And yet death has come to many people I knew then, young, rich, and happy. I recall to mind the delightful places where they lived, and ask myself where they are now, and what profit they derive today from the beautiful houses and grounds where I saw them enjoying all the good things of this life. And I reflect that "All is vanity besides loving God and serving Him alone."[15]

Perhaps Our Lord wished me to know something of the world before He paid His first visit to my soul, so that I might choose more deliberately the way in which I was to follow Him.

I shall always remember my First Communion Day as one of unclouded happiness. It seems to me that I could not have been better prepared. Do you remember, dear Mother, the charming little book you gave me three months before the great day? I found in it a helpful method which prepared me gradually and thoroughly. It is true I had been thinking about my First Communion for a long time, but, as your precious manuscript told me, I must stir up in my heart fresh transports of love and fill it anew with flowers. So, each day I made a number of little sacrifices and acts of love, which were to be changed into so many flowers: now violets, another time roses, then cornflowers, daisies, or forget-me-nots—in a word, all nature's blossoms were to form in me a cradle for the Holy Child.

I had Marie, too, who took Pauline's place. Every evening I spent a long time with her, listening eagerly to all she said. How delightfully she talked to me! I felt myself set on fire by her noble, generous spirit. As the warriors of old trained their children in the profession of arms, so she trained me for the battle of life, and roused my ardor by pointing to the victor's glorious palm. She spoke, too, of the imperishable riches which are so easy to amass each day, and of the folly of trampling them under foot when one has but to stoop and gather them. When she talked so eloquently, I was sorry that I was the only one to 1isten to her teaching, for, in my simplicity, it seemed to me that the greatest sinners would be converted if they but heard her, and that, forsaking the perishable riches of this world, they would seek none but the riches of Heaven.

I should have liked at this time to practice mental prayer, but Marie, finding me sufficiently devout, only let me say my vocal prayers. A mistress at the Abbey asked me once what I did on holidays, when I stayed at home. I answered timidly: "I often hide myself in a corner of my room where I can shut myself in with the bed curtains, and then I think." "But what do you think about?" said the good nun, laughing. "I think about the Good God, about the shortness of life, and about eternity: in a word, I think." My mistress did not forget this, and later on she used to remind me of the time when I thought, asking

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[15] Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, book 1, chapter 1.

me if I still thought. . . . Now, I know that I was really praying, while my Divine Master gently instructed me.

The three months' preparation for First Communion passed quickly by; it was soon time for me to begin my retreat, and, during it, I stayed at the Abbey. Oh, what a blessed retreat it was! I do not think that one can experience such joy except in a religious house; there, with only a few children, it is easy for each one to receive special attention. I write this in a spirit of filial gratitude; our mistresses at the Abbey showed us a true motherly affection. I do not know why, but I saw plainly that they watched over me more carefully than they did over the others.

Every night the first mistress, carrying her little lamp, opened my bed curtains softly, and kissed me tenderly on the forehead. She showed me such affection that, touched by her kindness, I said one night: "Mother, I love you so much that I am going to tell you a great secret." Then I took from under my pillow the precious little book you had given me, and showed it to her, my eyes sparkling with pleasure. She opened it with care, and, looking through it attentively, told me how privileged I was. In fact, several times during the retreat, the truth came home to me that very few motherless children of my age are as lovingly cared for as I was then.

I listened most attentively to the instructions given us by Father Domin, and wrote careful notes on them, but I did not put down any of my own thoughts, as I knew I should remember them quite well. And so it proved.

How happy I was to attend Divine Office as the nuns did! I was easily distinguished from my companions by a large crucifix, which Léonie had given me, and which, like the missionaries, I carried in my belt. They thought I was trying to imitate my Carmelite sister, and indeed my thoughts did often turn lovingly to her. I knew she was in retreat too, not that Jesus might give Himself to her, but that she might give herself entirely to Jesus, and this on the same day as I made my First Communion. The time of quiet waiting was therefore doubly dear to me.

At last there dawned the most beautiful day of all the days of my life. How perfectly I remember even the smallest details of those sacred hours! The joyful awakening, the reverent and tender embraces of my mistresses and older companions, the room filled with snow-white frocks, where each child was dressed in turn, and, above all, our entrance into the chapel and the melody of the morning hymn: "O Altar of God, where the Angels are hovering."

But I would not and I could not tell you all. Some things lose their fragrance when exposed to the air, and so, too, one's inmost thoughts cannot be translated into earthly words without instantly losing their deep and heavenly meaning. How sweet was the first embrace of Jesus! It was indeed an embrace of love. I felt that I was loved, and I said: "I love Thee, and I give myself to Thee for ever." Jesus asked nothing of me, and claimed no sacrifice; for a long time He and little Thérèse had known and understood one another. That day our meeting was more than simple recognition, it was perfect union. We were no longer two. Thérèse had disappeared like a drop of water lost in the immensity of the ocean; Jesus alone remained—He was the Master, the King! Had not Thérèse asked Him to take away her liberty which frightened her? She felt herself so weak and frail, that she wished to be for ever united to the Divine Strength.

And then my joy became so intense, so deep, that it could not be restrained; tears of happiness welled up and overflowed. My companions were astonished, and asked each other afterwards: "Why did she cry? Had she anything on her conscience? No, it is because neither her Mother nor her dearly loved Carmelite sister is here." And no one understood that all the joy of Heaven had come down into one heart, and that this heart, exiled, weak, and mortal as it was, could not contain it without tears.

How could my Mother's absence grieve me on my First Communion Day? As Heaven Itself dwelt in my soul, in receiving a visit from Our Divine Lord I received one from my dear Mother too. Nor was I crying on account of Pauline's absence, for we were even more closely united than before. No, I repeat it—joy alone, a joy too deep for words, overflowed within me.

During the afternoon I read the act of consecration to Our Lady, for myself and my companions. I was chosen probably because I had been deprived of my earthly Mother while still so young. With all my heart I consecrated myself to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and asked her to watch over me. She seemed to look lovingly on her Little Flower and to smile at her again, and I thought of the visible smile which had once cured me, and of all I owed her. Had she not herself, on the morning of that 8th of May, placed in the garden of my soul her Son Jesus—"the Flower of the field and the Lily of the valleys" ? (cf. Song of Solomon 2:1).

On the evening of this happy day Papa and I went to the Carmel, and I saw Pauline, now become the Spouse of Christ. She wore a white veil like mine and a crown of roses. My joy was unclouded, for I hoped soon to join her, and at her side to wait for Heaven.

I was pleased with the feast prepared for me at home, and was delighted with the beautiful watch given to me by Papa. My happiness was perfect, and nothing troubled the inward peace of my soul. Night came, and so ended that beautiful day. Even the brightest days are followed by darkness; one alone will know no setting, the day of the First and Eternal Communion in our true home. Somehow the next day seemed sorrowful. The pretty clothes and the presents I had received could not satisfy me. Henceforth Our Lord alone could fill my heart, and all I longed for was the blissful moment when I should receive Him again.

I made my second Communion on Ascension Day, and had the happiness of kneeling at the rails between Papa and Marie. My tears flowed with inexpressible sweetness; I kept repeating those words of St. Paul: "I live now, not I; but Christ liveth in me." (Galatians 2:20). After this second visit of Our Lord I longed for nothing else but to receive Him. Alas! the feasts seemed so far apart. . . .

On the eve of these happy days Marie helped me to prepare, as she had done for my First Communion. I remember once she spoke of suffering, and said that in all probability, instead of making me walk by this road, God, in His goodness, would carry me always like a little child. Her words came into my mind next day after my Communion; my heart became inflamed with an ardent desire for suffering, and I felt convinced that many crosses were in store for me. Then my soul was flooded with such consolation as I have never since experienced. Suffering became attractive, and I found in it charms which held me spellbound, though as yet I did not appreciate them to the full.

I had one other great wish; it was to love God only, and to find my joy in Him alone. During my thanksgiving alter Holy Communion I often repeated this passage from the

Imitation of Christ: "O my God, Who art unspeakable sweetness, turn for me into bitterness all the consolations of earth."[16] These words rose to my lips quite naturally; I said them like a child, who, without well understanding, repeats what a friend may suggest. Later on I will tell you, dear Mother, how Our Lord has been pleased to fulfill my desire, how He, and He alone, has always been my joy; but if I were to speak of it now I should have to pass on to my girlhood, and there is still much to tell you of my early days.

Soon after my First Communion I went into retreat again, before being confirmed. I prepared myself with the greatest care for the coming of the Holy Ghost; I could not understand anyone not doing so before receiving this Sacrament of Love. As the ceremony could not take place on the day fixed, I had the consolation of remaining somewhat longer in retreat. How happy I felt! Like the Apostles, I looked with joy for the promised Comforter, gladdened by the thought that I should soon be a perfect Christian, and have the holy Cross, the symbol of this wondrous Sacrament, traced upon my forehead for eternity. I did not feel the mighty wind of the first Pentecost, but rather the gentle breeze which the prophet Elias heard on Mount Horeb. On that day I received the gift of fortitude in suffering—a gift I needed sorely, for the martyrdom of my soul was soon to begin.

When these delightful feasts, which can never be forgotten, were over, I had to resume my life as a day scholar, at the Abbey. I made good progress with my lessons, and remembered easily the sense of what I read, but I had the greatest difficulty in learning by heart; only at catechism were my efforts crowned with success. The Chaplain called me his little "Doctor of Theology,"[17] no doubt because of my name, Thérèse.

During recreation I often gave myself up to serious thoughts, while from a distance I watched my companions at play. This was my favorite occupation, but I had another which gave me real pleasure. I would search carefully for any poor little birds that had fallen dead under the big trees, and I then buried them with great ceremony, all in the same cemetery, in a special grass plot. Sometimes I told stories to my companions, and often even the big girls came to listen; but soon our mistress, very rightly, brought my career as an orator to an end, saying she wanted us to exercise our bodies and not our brains. At this time I chose as friends two little girls of my own age; but how shallow are the hearts of creatures! One of them had to stay at home for some months; while she was away I thought about her very often, and on her return I showed how pleased I was. However, all I got was a glance of indifference—my friendship was not appreciated. I felt this very keenly, and I no longer sought an affection which had proved so inconstant. Nevertheless I still love my little school friend, and continue to pray for her, for God has given me a faithful heart, and when once I love, I love for ever.

Observing that some of the girls were very devoted to one or other of the mistresses, I tried to imitate them, but I never succeeded in winning special favor. O happy failure, from how many evils have you saved me! I am most thankful to Our Lord that He let me find

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[16] Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, book 3, chapter 26.

[17] St. Teresa of Avila, who reformed the Carmelite Order, and died in 1582, was sometimes called the Doctor of Mystical Theology, because of her luminous writings on the relations of the soul with God in prayer. However, at the time that Thérèse wrote her autobiography, St. Teresa of Avila had been canonized a Saint, but had not yet been officially chosen as a Doctor of the Church. In 1970, Pope Paul VI placed St. Teresa of Avila among the Doctors of the Church, and in 1997, Pope John Paul II added St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the little white flower, as the 33rd Doctor of the Church.

only bitterness in earthly friendships. With a heart like mine, I should have been taken captive and had my wings clipped, and how then should I have been able to "fly away and be at rest" ? (Psalms 55:6).

How can a heart given up to human affections be closely united to God? It seems to me that it is impossible. I have seen so many souls, allured by this false light, fly right into it like poor moths, and burn their wings, and then return, wounded, to Our Lord, the Divine Fire which burns and does not consume. I know well Our Lord saw that I was too weak to be exposed to temptation, for, without doubt, had the deceitful light of created love dazzled my eyes, I should have been entirely consumed. Where strong souls find joy and practice detachment faithfully, I only found bitterness. No merit, then, is due to me for not having given myself up to these frail ties, since I was only preserved from them by the Mercy of God. I fully realized that without Him I should have fallen as low as St. Mary Magdalen, and the Divine Master's words re-echoed sweetly in my soul. Yes, I know that "To whom less is forgiven he loveth less," (Lk 7:47), but I know too that Our Lord has forgiven me more than St. Mary Magdalen. I wish I could express all that I feel about it. Here is an example which will, at any rate, show you some of my thoughts.

Let us suppose that the son of a very clever doctor, stumbling over a stone on the road, falls and breaks his leg. His father hastens to him, lifts him lovingly, and binds up the fractured limb, putting forth all his skill. The son, when cured, displays the utmost gratitude, and he has excellent reason for doing so. But let us take another supposition.

The father, aware that a dangerous stone lies in his son's path, is beforehand with the danger and removes it, unseen by anyone. The son, thus tenderly cared for, not knowing of the mishap from which his father's hand has saved him, naturally will not show him any gratitude, and will love him less than if he had cured him of a grievous wound. But suppose he heard the whole truth, would he not in that case love him still more? Well now, I am this child, the object of the foreseeing love of a Father "Who did not send His Son to call the just, but sinners." (Lk 5:32). He wishes me to love Him, because He has forgiven me, not much, but everything. Without waiting for me to love Him much, as St. Mary Magdalen did, He has made me understand how He has loved me with an ineffable love and forethought, so that now my love may know no bounds.

I had often heard it said, both in retreats and elsewhere, that He is more deeply loved by repentant souls than by those who have not lost their baptismal innocence. Ah! if I could but give the lie to those words. . . .

But I have wandered so far from my subject that I hardly know where to begin again. It was during the retreat before my second Communion that I was attacked by the terrible disease of scruples. One must have passed through this martyrdom to understand it. It would be quite impossible for me to tell you what I suffered for nearly two years. All my thoughts and actions, even the simplest, were a source of trouble and anguish to me; I had no peace till I had told Marie everything, and this was most painful, since I imagined I was obliged to tell absolutely all my thoughts, even the most extravagant. As soon as I had unburdened myself I felt a momentary peace, but it passed like a flash, and my martyrdom began again. Many an occasion for patience did I provide for my dear sister.

That year we spent a fortnight of our holidays at the sea-side. My aunt, who always showed us such motherly care, treated us to all possible pleasures—donkey rides, shrimping, and the rest. She even spoiled us in the matter of clothes. I remember one day

she gave me some pale blue ribbon; although I was twelve and a half, I was still such a child that I quite enjoyed tying it in my hair. But this childish pleasure seemed sinful to me, and I had so many scruples that I had to go to Confession, even at Trouville.

While I was there I had an experience which did me good. My cousin Marie often suffered from sick headaches. On these occasions my aunt used to fondle her and coax her with the most endearing names, but the only response was continual tears and the unceasing cry: "My head aches!" I had a headache nearly every day, though I did not say so; but one evening I thought I would imitate Marie. So I sat down in an armchair in a corner of the room, and set to work to cry. My aunt, as well as my cousin Jeanne, to whom I was very devoted, hastened to me to know what was the matter. I answered like Marie: "My head aches." It would seem that complaining was not in my line; no one would believe that a headache was the reason of my tears. Instead of petting me as usual, my aunt spoke to me seriously. Even Jeanne reproached me, very kindly it is true, and was grieved at my want of simplicity and trust in my aunt. She thought I had a big scruple, and was not giving the real reason of my tears. At last, getting nothing for my pains, I made up my mind not to imitate other people any more. I thought of the fable of the ass and the little dog; I was the ass, who, seeing that the little dog got all the petting, put his clumsy hoof on the table to try and secure his share. If I did not have a beating like the poor beast, at any rate I got what I deserved—a severe lesson, which cured me once for all of the desire to attract attention.

I must go back now to the subject of my scruples. They made me so ill that I was obliged to leave school when I was thirteen. In order to continue my education, Papa took me several times a week to a lady who was an excellent teacher. Her lessons served the double purpose of instructing me and making me associate with other people.

Visitors were often shown into the old-fashioned room where I sat with my books and exercises. As far as possible my teacher's mother carried on the conversation, but still I did not learn much while it lasted. Seemingly absorbed in my book, I could hear many things it would have been better for me not to hear. One lady said I had beautiful hair; another asked, as she left, who was that pretty little girl. Such remarks, the more flattering because I was not meant to hear them, gave me a feeling of pleasure which showed plainly that I was full of self-love.

I am very sorry for souls who lose themselves in this way. It is so easy to go astray in the seductive paths of the world. Without doubt, for a soul somewhat advanced in virtue, the sweetness offered by the world is mingled with bitterness, and the immense void of its desires cannot be filled by the flattery of a moment; but I repeat, if my heart had not been lifted up towards God from the first moment of consciousness, if the world had smiled on me from the beginning of my life, what should I have become? Dearest Mother, with what a grateful heart do I sing "the Mercies of the Lord!" Has He not, according to the words of Holy Wisdom, "taken me away from the world lest wickedness should alter my understanding, or deceit beguile my soul" ? (Wisdom 4:11).

Meanwhile I resolved to consecrate myself in a special way to Our Blessed Lady, and I begged to be enrolled among the Children of Mary.[18] To gain this favor I had to go twice a week to the Convent, and I must confess this cost me something, I was so shy. There was

[18] It was on May 31, 1886, that she became a Sodalist of Our Lady.

no question of the affection I felt towards my mistresses, but, as I said before, I had no special friend among them, with whom I could have spent many hours like other old pupils. So I worked in silence till the end of the lesson, and then, as no one took any notice of me, I went to the tribune in the Chapel till Papa came to fetch me home. Here, during this silent visit, I found my one consolation—for was not Jesus my only Friend? To Him alone could I open my heart; all conversation with creatures, even on holy subjects, wearied me. It is true that in these periods of loneliness I sometimes felt sad, and I used often to console myself by repeating this line of a beautiful poem Papa had taught me: "Time is thy barque, and not thy dwelling-place."

Young as I was, these words restored my courage, and even now, in spite of having outgrown many pious impressions of childhood, the symbol of a ship always delights me and helps me to bear the exile of this life. Does not the Wise Man tell us—"Life is like a ship that passeth through the waves: when it is gone by, the trace thereof cannot be found" ? (Wisdom 5:10).

When my thoughts run on in this way, my soul loses itself as it were in the infinite; I seem already to touch the Heavenly Shore and to receive Our Lord's embrace. I fancy I can see Our Blessed Lady coming to meet me, with my Father and Mother, my little brothers and sisters; and I picture myself enjoying true family joys for all eternity.

But before reaching Our Father's Home in Heaven, I had to go through many partings on this earth. The year in which I was made a Child of Mary, Our Lady took from me my sister Marie, the only support of my soul,[19] my oracle and inseparable companion since the departure of Pauline. As soon as I knew of her decision, I made up my mind to take no further pleasure in anything here below. I could not tell you how many tears I shed. But at this time I was much given to crying, not only over big things, but over trifling ones too. For instance: I was very anxious to advance in virtue, but I went about it in a strange way. I was not accustomed to wait on myself; Céline always arranged our room, and I never did any household work. Sometimes, in order to please Our Lord, I used to make my bed, or, if she were out in the evening, to bring in her plants and seedlings. As I said before, it was simply to please Our Lord that I did these things, and so I ought not to have expected any thanks from creatures. But, alas! I did expect them, and, if unfortunately Céline did not seem surprised and grateful for my little services, I was not pleased, and tears rose to my eyes.

Again, if by accident I offended anyone, instead of taking it in the right way, I fretted till I made myself ill, thus making my fault worse, instead of mending it; and when I began to realize my foolishness, I would cry for having cried.

In fact, I made troubles out of everything. Now, things are quite different. God in His goodness has given me grace not to be cast down by any passing difficulty. When I think of what I used to be, my heart overflows with gratitude. The graces I have received have changed me so completely, that I am scarcely the same person.

After Marie entered the Carmel, and I no longer had her to listen to my scruples, I turned towards Heaven and confided them to the four little angels who had already gone before me, for I thought that these innocent souls, who had never known sorrow or fear, ought to

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[19] Marie entered the Carmel of Lisieux on October 15, 1886, taking the name of Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart.

have pity on their poor little suffering sister. I talked to them with childish simplicity, telling them that, as I was the youngest of the family, I had always been the most petted and loved by my parents and sisters; that if they had remained on earth they would no doubt have given me the same proofs of their affection. The fact that they had gone to Heaven seemed no reason why they should forget me—on the contrary, as they were able to draw from the treasury of Heaven, they ought to obtain for me the grace of peace, and prove that they still knew how to love me.

The answer was not long in coming; soon my soul was flooded with the sweetest peace. I knew that I was loved, not only on earth, but also in Heaven. From that time my devotion for these little brothers and sisters increased; I loved to talk to them and tell them of all the sorrows of this exile, and of my wish to join them soon in our Eternal Home.

Chapter 5

Vocation of Thérèse

I was far from meriting all the graces which Our Lord showered on me. I had a constant and ardent desire to advance in virtue, but often my actions were spoilt by imperfections. My extreme sensitiveness made me almost unbearable. All arguments were useless. I simply could not correct myself of this miserable fault. How, then, could I hope soon to be admitted to the Carmel? A miracle on a small scale was needed to give me strength of character all at once, and God worked this long-desired miracle on Christmas Day, 1886.

On that blessed night the sweet Infant Jesus, scarce an hour old, filled the darkness of my soul with floods of light. By becoming weak and little, for love of me, He made me strong and brave; He put His own weapons into my hands, so that I went from victory to victory, beginning, if I may say so, "to run as a giant." (Psalms 19:5). The fountain of my tears was dried up, and from that time they flowed neither easily nor often.

Now I will tell you, dear Mother, how I received this inestimable grace of complete conversion. I knew that when we reached home after Midnight Mass I should find my shoes in the chimney-corner, filled with presents, just as when I was a little child, which proves that my sisters still treated me as a baby. Papa, too, liked to watch my enjoyment and hear my cries of delight at each fresh surprise that came from the magic shoes, and his pleasure added to mine. But the time had come when Our Lord wished to free me from childhood's failings, and even withdraw me from its innocent pleasures. On this occasion, instead of indulging me as he generally did, Papa seemed vexed, and on my way upstairs I heard him say: "Really all this is too babyish for a big girl like Thérèse, and I hope it is the last year it will happen." His words cut me to the quick. Céline, knowing how sensitive I was, whispered: "Don't go downstairs just yet—wait a little, you would cry too much if you looked at your presents before Papa." But Thérèse was no longer the same—Jesus had changed her heart.

Choking back my tears, I ran down to the dining-room, and, though my heart beat fast, I picked up my shoes, and gaily pulled out all the things, looking as happy as a queen. Papa laughed, and did not show any trace of displeasure, and Céline thought she must be dreaming. But happily it was a reality; little Thérèse had regained, once for all, the strength of mind which she had lost at the age of four and a half.

On this night of grace, the third period of my life began—the most beautiful of all, the one most filled with heavenly favours. In an instant Our Lord, satisfied with my good will, accomplished the work I had not been able to do during all these years. Like the Apostle I could say: "Master, we have labored all night, and have taken nothing." (Luke 5:5).

More merciful to me even than to His beloved Disciples, Our Lord Himself took the net, cast it, and drew it out full of fishes. He made me a fisher of men. Love and a spirit of self-forgetfulness took possession of me, and from that time I was perfectly happy.

One Sunday, closing my book at the end of Mass, a picture of Our Lord on the Cross half slipped out, showing only one of His Divine Hands, pierced and bleeding. I felt an indescribable thrill, such as I had never felt before. My heart was torn with grief to see that

Precious Blood falling to the ground, and no one caring to treasure It as It fell, and I resolved to remain continually in spirit at the foot of the Cross, that I might receive the Divine Dew of Salvation and pour it forth upon souls. From that day the cry of my dying Savior—"I thirst!" sounded incessantly in my heart, and kindled therein a burning zeal hitherto unknown to me. My one desire was to give my Beloved to drink; I felt myself consumed with thirst for souls, and I longed at any cost to snatch sinners from the everlasting flames of hell.

In order still further to enkindle my ardor, Our Divine Master soon proved to me how pleasing to Him was my desire. Just then I heard much talk of a notorious criminal, Pranzini, who was sentenced to death for several shocking murders, and, as he was quite impenitent, everyone feared he would be eternally lost. How I longed to avert this irreparable calamity! In order to do so I employed all the spiritual means I could think of, and, knowing that my own efforts were unavailing, I offered for his pardon the infinite merits of Our Saviour and the treasures of Holy Church.

Need I say that in the depths of my heart I felt certain my request would be granted? But, that I might gain courage to persevere in the quest for souls, I said in all simplicity: "My God, I am quite sure that Thou wilt pardon this unhappy Pranzini. I should still think so if he did not confess his sins or give any sign of sorrow, because I have such confidence in Thy unbounded Mercy; but this is my first sinner, and therefore I beg for just one sign of repentance to reassure me." My prayer was granted to the letter. My Father never allowed us to read the papers, but I did not think there was any disobedience in looking at the part about Pranzini. The day after his execution I hastily opened the paper, La Croix, and what did I see? Tears betrayed my emotion; I was obliged to run out of the room. Pranzini had mounted the scaffold without confessing or receiving absolution, and the executioners were already dragging him towards the fatal block, when all at once, apparently in answer to a sudden inspiration, he turned round, seized the crucifix which the Priest was offering to him, and kissed Our Lord's Sacred Wounds three times. I had obtained the sign I asked for, and to me it was especially sweet. Was it not when I saw the Precious Blood flowing from the Wounds of Jesus that the thirst for souls first took possession of me? I wished to give them to drink of the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb that It might wash away their stains, and the lips of "my first born" had been pressed to these Divine Wounds. What a wonderful answer!

After receiving this grace my desire for the salvation of souls increased day by day. I seemed to hear Our Lord whispering to me, as He did to the Samaritan woman: "Give me to drink!" (John 4:7). It was indeed an exchange of love: upon souls I poured forth the Precious Blood of Jesus, and to Jesus I offered these souls refreshed with the Dew of Calvary. In this way I thought to quench His Thirst; but the more I gave Him to drink, so much the more did the thirst of my own poor soul increase, and I accepted it as the most delightful recompense.

In a short time God, in His goodness, had lifted me out of the narrow sphere in which I lived. The great step was taken; but, alas ! I had still a long road to travel. Now that I was free from scruples and morbid sensitiveness, my mind developed. I had always loved what was noble and beautiful, and about this time I was seized with a passionate desire for learning. Not content with lessons from my teachers, I took up certain subjects by myself, and learnt more in a few months than I had in my whole school life. Was not this ardor—

"vanity and vexation of spirit" ? (Ecclesiastes 1:14). For me, with my impetuous nature, this was one of the most dangerous times of my life, but Our Lord fulfilled in me those words of Ezekiel's prophecy:

"Behold thy time was the time of lovers: and I spread my garment over thee. And I swore to thee, and I entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord Cod, and thou becamest Mine. And I washed thee with water, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee with fine garments, and put a chain about thy neck. Thou didst eat fine flour and honey and oil, and wast made exceedingly beautiful, and wast advanced to be a queen." (cf. Ezekiel 16:8-13).

Yes, Our Lord has done all this for me. I might take each word of that striking passage, and show how it has been completely realized in me, but the graces of which I have already told you are sufficient proof. So I will only speak now of the food with which my Divine Master abundantly provided me. For a long time I had nourished my spiritual life with the "fine flour" contained in the Imitation of Christ. It was the only book which did me good, for I had not yet found the treasures hidden in the Holy Gospels. I always had it with me, to the amusement of my people at home. My aunt used often to open it, and make me repeat by heart the first chapter she chanced to light upon.

Seeing my great thirst for knowledge, God was pleased, when I was fourteen, to add to the "fine flour," "honey" and "oil" in abundance.

This "honey" and "oil" I found in the conferences of Father Arminjon on The End of this World and the Mysteries of the World to Come. While reading this book my soul was flooded with a happiness quite supernatural. I experienced a foretaste of what God has prepared for those who love Him; and, seeing that eternal rewards are so much in excess of the petty sacrifices of this life, I yearned to love Our Lord, to love Him passionately, and to give Him countless proofs of affection while this was still in my power.

Céline had become the most intimate sharer of my thoughts, especially since Christmas. Our Lord, Who wished to make us advance in virtue together, drew us to one another by ties stronger than blood. He made us sisters in spirit as well as in the flesh. The words of our Holy Father, St. John of the Cross, were realized in us:

Treading within Thy Footsteps
Young maidens lightly run upon the way.
From the spark's contact,
And the spiced wine,
They give forth aspirations of a balm divine.

It was lightly indeed that we followed in the footsteps of Our Saviour. The burning sparks which He cast into our souls, the strong wine which He gave us to drink, made us lose sight of all earthly things, and we breathed forth sighs of love.

Very sweet is the memory of our intercourse. Every evening we went up to our attic window together and gazed at the starry depths of the sky, and I think very precious graces

were bestowed on us then. As the Imitation says: "God communicates Himself sometimes amid great light, at other times sweetly in signs and figures."[20]

In this way He deigned to manifest Himself to our hearts; but how slight and transparent was the veil! Doubt was no longer possible; already Faith and Hope had given place to Love, which made us find Him whom we sought, even on this earth. When He found us alone—"He gave us His kiss, and now no one may despise us." (cf. Song of Solomon 8:1).

These divine impressions could not but bear fruit. The practice of virtue gradually became sweet and natural to me. At first my looks betrayed the effort, but, little by little, self-sacrifice seemed to come more easily and without hesitation. Our Lord has said: "To everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall abound." (Luke 19:26).

Each grace faithfully received brought many others. He gave Himself to me in Holy Communion oftener than I should have dared to hope. I had made it my practice to go to Communion as often as my confessor allowed me, but never to ask for leave to go more frequently. Now, however, I should act differently, for I am convinced that a soul ought to disclose to her director the longing she has to receive her God. He does not come down from Heaven each day in order to remain in a golden ciborium, but to find another Heaven—the Heaven of our souls in which He takes such delight.

Our Lord, Who knew my desire, inspired my confessor to allow me to go to Communion several times a week, and this permission, coming as it did straight from Him, filled me with joy.

In those days I did not dare to speak of my inner fee1ings; the road which I trod was so direct, so clear, that I did not feel the need of any guide but Jesus. I compared directors to mirrors who faithfully reflect Our Saviour to the souls under their care, and I thought that in my case He did not use an intermediary but acted directly.

When a gardener gives special attention to a fruit which he wishes to ripen early, he does so, not with a view to leaving it on the tree, but in order to place it on a well-spread table. Our Lord lavished His favours on His Little Flower in the same way. He wished His Mercies to shine forth in me—He Who, while on earth, cried out in a transport of joy: "I bless Thee, O Father, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones." (cf. Luke 10:21).

And because I was small and frail, He bent down to me and instructed me sweetly in the secrets of His love. As St. John of the Cross says in his "Canticle of the Soul":

On that happy night
In secret I went forth, beheld by none,
And seeing naught;
Having no light nor guide
Excepting that which burned within my heart,

Which lit my way
More safely than the glare of noon-day sun
To where, expectant,
He waited for me Who doth know me well,

[20] Cf. Imitation of Christ, book 3, chapter 43.

Where none appeared but He.

This place was Carmel, but before I could "sit down under His Shadow Whom I desired," I had to pass through many trials (cf. Song of Solomon 2:3). And yet the Divine Call was becoming so insistent that, had it been necessary for me to go through fire, I would have thrown myself into it to follow my Divine Master.

Pauline [Sister Agnes of Jesus] was the only one who encouraged me in my vocation; Marie thought I was too young, and you, dear Mother, no doubt to prove me, tried to restrain my ardor. From the start I encountered nothing but difficulties. Then, too, I dared not speak of it to Céline, and this silence pained me deeply; it was so hard to have a secret she did not share.

However, this dear sister soon found out my intention, and, far from wishing to keep me back, she accepted the sacrifice with wonderful courage. As she also wished to be a nun, she ought to have been given the first opportunity; but, imitating the martyrs of old, who used joyfully to embrace those chosen to go before them into the arena, she allowed me to leave her, and took my troubles as much to heart as if it were a question of her own vocation. From Céline, then, I had nothing to fear, but I did not know how to set about telling Papa. How could his little Queen talk of leaving him when he had already parted with his two eldest daughters? Moreover, this year he had been stricken with a serious attack of paralysis, and though he recovered quickly we were full of anxiety for the future.

What struggles I went through before I could make up my mind to speak! But I had to act decisively; I was now fourteen and a half, and in six months' time the blessed feast of Christmas would be here. I had resolved to enter the Carmel at the same hour at which a year before I had received the grace of conversion.

I chose the feast of Pentecost on which to make my great disclosure. All day I was praying for light from the Holy Spirit, and begging the Apostles to pray for me, to inspire me with the words I ought to use. Were they not the very ones to help a timid child whom God destined to become an apostle of apostles by prayer and sacrifice ?

In the afternoon, when Vespers were over, I found the opportunity I wanted. My Father was sitting in the garden, his hands clasped, admiring the wonders of nature. The rays of the setting sun gilded the tops of the tall trees, and the birds chanted their evening prayer.

His beautiful face wore a heavenly expression—I could feel that his soul was full of peace. Without a word, I sat down by his side, my eyes already wet with tears. He looked at me with indescribable tenderness, and, pressing me to his heart, said: "What is it, little Queen? Tell me everything." Then, in order to hide his own emotion, he rose and walked slowly up and down, still holding me close to him.

Through my tears I spoke of the Carmel and of my great wish to enter soon. He, too, wept, but did not say a word to turn me from my vocation; he only told me that I was very young to make such a grave decision, and as I insisted, and fully explained my reasons, my noble and generous Father was soon convinced. We walked about for a long time; my heart was lightened, and Papa no longer shed tears. He spoke to me as Saints speak, and showed me some flowers growing in the low stone wall. Picking one of them, he gave it to me, and explained the loving care with which God had made it spring up and grow till now.

I fancied myself listening to my own story, so close was the resemblance between the little flower and little Thérèse. I received this floweret as a relic, and noticed that in

gathering it my Father had pulled it up by the roots without breaking them; it seemed destined to live on, but in other and more fertile soil. Papa had just done the same for me. He allowed me to leave the sweet valley, where I had passed the first years of my life, for the mountain of Carmel. I fastened my little white flower to a picture of Our Lady of Victories—the Blessed Virgin smiles on it, and the Infant Jesus seems to hold it in His Hand. It is there still, but the stalk is broken close to the root. God doubtless wishes me to understand that He will soon break all the earthly ties of His Little Flower and will not leave her to wither on this earth.

Having obtained my Father's consent, I thought I could now fly to the Carmel without hindrance. Far from it! When I told my uncle of my project, he declared that to enter such a severe Order at the age of fifteen seemed to him against all common sense, and that it would be doing a wrong to religion to let a child embrace such a life. He added that he should oppose it in every way possible, and that nothing short of a miracle would make him change his mind.

I could see that all arguments were useless, so I left him, my heart weighed down by profound sadness. My only consolation was prayer. I entreated Our Lord to work this miracle for me because thus only could I respond to His appeal. Some time went by, and my uncle did not seem even to remember our conversation, though I learnt later that it had been constantly in his thoughts.

Before allowing a ray of hope to shine on my soul, Our Lord deigned to send me another most painful trial which lasted for three days. Never had I understood so well the bitter grief of Our Lady and St. Joseph when they were searching the streets of Jerusalem for the Divine Child. I seemed to be in a frightful desert, or rather, my soul was like a frail skiff, without a pilot, at the mercy of the stormy waves. I knew that Jesus was there asleep in my little boat, but how could I see Him while the night was so dark? If the storm had really broken, a flash of lightning would perhaps have pierced the clouds that hung over me: even though it were but a passing ray, it would have enabled me to catch a momentary glimpse of the Beloved of my heart—but this was denied me. Instead, it was night, dark night, utter desolation, death! Like my Divine Master in the Agony in the Garden, I felt that I was alone, and found no comfort on earth or in Heaven.

Nature itself seemed to share my bitter sadness, for during these three days there was not a ray of sunshine and the rain fell in torrents. I have noticed again and again that in all the important events of my life nature has reflected my feelings. When I wept, the skies wept with me; when I rejoiced, no cloud darkened the blue of the heavens. On the fourth day, a Saturday, I went to see my uncle. What was my surprise when I found his attitude towards me entirely changed! He invited me into his study, a privilege I had not asked for; then, after gently reproaching me for being a little constrained with him, he told me that the miracle of which he had spoken was no longer needed. He had prayed God to guide his heart aright, and his prayer had been heard. I felt as if I hardly knew him, he seemed so different. He embraced me with fatherly affection, saying with much feeling: "Go in peace, my dear child, you are a privileged little flower which Our Lord wishes to gather. I will put no obstacle in the way."

Joyfully I went home. . . The clouds had quite disappeared from the sky, and in my soul also dark night was over. Jesus had awakened to gladden my heart. I no longer heard the roar of the waves. Instead of the bitter wind of trial, a light breeze swelled my sail, and I

fancied myself safe in port. Alas! more than one storm was yet to rise, sometimes even making me fear that I should be driven, without hope of return, from the shore which I longed to reach.

I had obtained my uncle's consent, only to be told by you, dear Mother, that the Superior of the Carmelites would not allow me to enter till I was twenty-one. No one had dreamt of this serious opposition, the hardest of all to overcome. And yet, without losing courage, I went with Papa to lay my request before him. He received me very coldly, and could not be induced to change his mind. We left him at last with a very decided " No." "Of course," he added, "I am only the Bishop's delegate; if he allows you to enter, I shall have nothing more to say."

When we came out of the Presbytery again, it was raining in torrents, and my soul, too, was overcast with heavy clouds. Papa did not know how to console me, but he promised, if I wished, to take me to Bayeux to see the Bishop, and to this I eagerly consented.

Many things happened, however, before we were able to go. To all appearances my life seemed to continue as formerly. I went on studying, and, what is more important, I went on growing in the love of God. Now and then I experienced what were indeed raptures of love. One evening, not knowing in what words to tell Our Lord how much I loved Him, and how much I wished that He was served and honored everywhere, I thought sorrowfully that from the depths of hell there does not go up to Him one single act of love. Then, from my inmost heart, I cried out that I would gladly be cast into that place of torment and blasphemy so that He might be eternally loved even there. This could not be for His Glory, since He only wishes our happiness, but love feels the need of saying foolish things. If I spoke in this way, it was not that I did not long to go to Heaven, but for me Heaven was nothing else than Love, and in my ardor I felt that nothing could separate me from the Divine Being Who held me captive.

About this time Our Lord gave me the consolation of an intimate knowledge of the souls of children. I gained it in this way. During the illness of a poor woman, I interested myself in her two little girls, the elder of whom was not yet six. It was a real pleasure to see how simply they believed all that I told them. Baptism does indeed plant deeply in our souls the theological virtues, since from early childhood the hope of heavenly reward is strong enough to make us practice self-denial. When I wanted my two little girls to be specially kind to one another, instead of promising them toys and sweets, I talked to them about the eternal recompense the Holy Child Jesus would give to good children. The elder one, who was coming to the use of reason, used to look quite pleased and asked me charming questions about the little Jesus and His beautiful Heaven. She promised me faithfully always to give in to her little sister, adding that all through her life she would never forget what I had taught her. I used to compare these innocent souls to soft wax, ready to receive any impression—evil, alas! as well as good, and I understood the words of Our Lord: "It were better to be thrown into the sea than to scandalize one of these little ones." (cf. Mt 18:6).

How many souls might attain to great sanctity if only they were directed aright from the first! I know God has not need of anyone to help Him in His work of sanctification, but as He allows a clever gardener to cultivate rare and delicate plants, giving him the skill to accomplish it, while reserving to Himself the right of making them grow, so does He wish to be helped in the cultivation of souls. What would happen if an ignorant gardener did not

graft his trees in the right way? if he did not understand the nature of each, and wished, for instance, to make roses grow on peach trees ?

This reminds me that I used to have among my birds a canary which sang beautifully, and also a little linnet taken from the nest, of which I was very fond. This poor little prisoner, deprived of the teaching it should have received from its parents, and hearing the joyous trills of the canary from morning to night, tried hard to imitate them. A difficult task indeed for a linnet! It was delightful to follow the efforts of the poor little thing; his sweet voice found great difficulty in accommodating itself to the vibrant notes of his master, but he succeeded in time, and, to my great surprise, his song became exactly like the song of the canary.

Oh, dear Mother, you know who taught me to sing from the days of my earliest childhood! You know the voices which drew me on. And now I trust that one day, in spite of my weakness, I may sing for ever the Canticle of Love, the harmonious notes of which I have often heard sweetly sounding here below.

But where am I? These thoughts have carried me too far, and I must resume the history of my vocation.

On October 31, 1887, alone with Papa, I started for Bayeux, my heart full of hope, but also excited at the idea of presenting myself at the Bishop's house. For the first time in my life, I was going to pay a visit without any of my sisters, and this to a Bishop. I, who had never yet had to speak except to answer questions addressed to me, would have to explain and enlarge on my reasons for begging to enter the Carmel, and so give proofs of the genuineness of my vocation.

It cost me a great effort to overcome my shyness sufficiently to do this. But it is true that Love knows no such word as "impossible," for it deems "all things possible, all things allowed."[21] Nothing whatsoever but the love of Jesus could have made me face these difficulties and others which followed, for I had to purchase my happiness by heavy trials. Now, it is true, I think I bought it very cheaply, and I would willingly bear a thousand times more bitter suffering to gain it, if it were not already mine.

When we reached the Bishop's house, the floodgates of Heaven seemed open once more. The Vicar-General, Father Révérony, who had settled the date of our coming, received us very kindly, though he looked a little surprised, and seeing tears in my eyes said: "Those diamonds must not be shown to His Lordship!" We were led through large reception-rooms which made me feel how small I was, and I wondered what I should dare say. The Bishop was walking in a corridor with two Priests. I saw the Vicar-General speak a few words to him, then they came into the room where we were waiting. There were three large armchairs in front of the fireplace, where a bright fire blazed.

As his Lordship entered, my Father and I knelt for his blessing; then he made us sit down. Father Révérony offered me the armchair in the middle. I excused myself politely, but he insisted, telling me to show if I knew how to obey. I did so without any more hesitation, and was mortified to see him take an ordinary chair while I was buried in an enormous seat that would comfortably have held four children like me—more comfortably in fact, for I was far from being at ease. I hoped that Papa was going to do all the talking, but he told me to explain the reason of our visit. I did so as eloquently as I could, though I

[21] Imitation of Christ

knew well that one word from the Superior would have carried more weight than all my reasons, while his opposition told strongly against me. The Bishop asked how long I had wanted to enter the Carmel. "A very long time, my Lord!" "Come!" said the Vicar-General, laughing, "it cannot be as long as fifteen years." "That is true," I answered, "but it is not much less, for I have wished to give myself to God from the time I was three." The Bishop, no doubt to please Papa, tried to explain that I ought to remain some time longer with him; but, to his great surprise and edification, my Father took my part, adding respectfully that we were going to Rome with the diocesan pilgrimage, and that I should not hesitate to speak to the Holy Father if I could not obtain permission before then. However, it was decided that, previous to giving an answer, an interview with the Superior was absolutely necessary. This was particularly unpleasant hearing, for I knew his declared and determined opposition; and, in spite of the advice not to allow the Bishop to see any diamonds, I not only showed them but let them fall. He seemed touched, and caressed me fondly. I was afterwards told he had never treated any child so kindly.

"All is not lost, little one," he said, "but I am very glad that you are going to Rome with your good Father; you will thus strengthen your vocation. Instead of weeping, you ought to rejoice. I am going to Lisieux next week, and I will talk to the Superior about you. You shall certainly have my answer when you are in Italy." His Lordship then took us to the garden, and was much interested when Papa told him that, to make myself look older, I had put up my hair for the first time that very morning. This was not forgotten, for I know that even now, whenever the Bishop tells anyone about his "little daughter," he always repeats the story about her hair. I must say I should prefer my little secret to have been kept. As he took us to the door, the Vicar-General remarked that such a thing had never been seen—a father as anxious to give his child to God as the child was to offer herself.

We had to return to Lisieux without a favorable answer. It seemed to me as though my future were shattered for ever; the nearer I drew to the goal, the greater my difficulties became. But all the time I felt deep down in my heart a wondrous peace, because I knew that I was only seeking the Will of my Lord.

Chapter 6

A Pilgrimage to Rome

Three days after the journey to Bayeux, I started on a much longer one—to the Eternal City. This journey taught me the vanity of all that passes away. Nevertheless I saw splendid monuments; I studied the countless wonders of art and religion; and better than all, I trod the very ground the Holy Apostles had trodden—the ground watered by the blood of martyrs—and my soul grew by contact with these holy things. I was delighted to go to Rome; but I could quite understand people crediting Papa with the hope that in this way I should be brought to change my mind about the religious life. It might certainly have upset a vocation that was not very strong.

To begin with, Céline and I found ourselves in the company of many distinguished people. In fact, there were scarcely any others in the pilgrimage; but, far from being dazzled thereby, titles seemed to us but a "vapor of smoke," (Joel 2:30; Acts 2:19) and I understood the words of the Imitation: "Be not solicitous for the shadow of a great name."[22] I understood that true greatness is not found in a name but in the soul. The Prophet Isaiah tells us: "The Lord shall call His servants by another name," (Is 65:15) and we read in St. John: "To him that overcometh I will give a white counter, and on the counter a new name written which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it." (Rev 2:17). In Heaven, therefore, we shall know our titles of nobility, and "then shall every man have praise from God," (1 Cor 4:5) and he who on earth chose to be poorest and least known for love of his Saviour, he will be the first, the noblest, and the richest.

The second thing I learned had to do with Priests. Up to this time I had not understood the chief aim of the Carmelite Reform. To pray for sinners delighted me; to pray for Priests, whose souls seemed pure as crystal, that indeed astonished me. But in Italy I realized my vocation, and even so long a journey was a small price to pay for such valuable knowledge. During that month I met with many holy Priests, and yet I saw that even though the sublime dignity of Priesthood raises them higher than the Angels, they are still but weak and imperfect men. And so if holy Priests, whom Our Lord in the Gospel calls the salt of the earth, have need of our prayers, what must we think of the lukewarm? Has not Our Lord said: "If the salt lose its savor wherewith shall it be salted?" (Mt 5:13). Oh, dear Mother, how beautiful is our vocation! We Carmelites are called to preserve "the salt of the earth." We offer our prayers and sacrifices for the apostles of the Lord; we ourselves ought to be their apostles, while they, by word and example, are preaching the Gospel to our brethren. Have we not a glorious mission to fulfill? But I must say no more, for I feel that on this subject my pen would run on for ever.

Now let me describe my journey in some detail. At three o'clock in the morning of November 4, we passed through the silent streets. Lisieux still lay shrouded in the darkness of night. I felt that I was going out into the unknown, and that great things were awaiting me in Rome. When we reached Paris, Papa took us to see all the sights. For me there was

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[22] *The Imitation of Christ*, book 3, chapter 24.

but one—Our Lady of Victories. I can never tell you what I felt at her shrine; the graces Our Lady granted me were like those of my First Communion Day. I was filled with peace and happiness. In this holy spot the Blessed Virgin, my Mother, told me plainly that it was really she who had smiled on me and cured me. With intense fervour I entreated her to keep me always, and to realize my heart's desire by hiding me under her spotless mantle, and I also asked her to remove from me every occasion of sin.

I was well aware that during this journey I should come across things that might disturb me; knowing nothing of evil, I feared I might discover it. As yet I had not experienced that "to the pure all things are pure," (Titus 1:15) that a simple and upright soul does not see evil in anything, because evil only exists in impure hearts and not in inanimate objects. I prayed specially to St. Joseph to watch over me; from my childhood, devotion to him has been interwoven with my love for our Blessed Lady. Every day I said the prayer beginning: "St. Joseph, Father and Protector of Virgins" . . . so I felt I was well protected and quite safe from danger.

We left Paris on November 7, after our solemn Consecration to the Sacred Heart in the Basilica of Montmartre.[23] Each compartment of the train was named after a Saint, and the selection was made in honor of some Priest occupying it—his own patron or that of his parish being chosen. But in the presence of all the pilgrims our compartment was named after St. Martin! My Father, deeply touched by this compliment, went at once to thank Mgr. Legoux, Vicar-General of Coutances and director of the pilgrimage. From this onwards he was often called—"Monsieur Saint Martin."

Father Révérony watched my behavior closely. I could tell that he was doing so; at table, if I were not opposite to him, he would lean forward to look at me and listen to what I was saying. I think he must have been satisfied with his investigations, for, towards the end of the journey, he seemed more favorably disposed. I say towards the end, for in Rome he was far from being my advocate, as I will tell you presently. Still I would not have it thought he deceived me in any way by falling short of the good will he had shown at Bayeux. On the contrary, I am sure that he always felt kindly towards me, and that if he opposed my wishes it was only to put me to the test.

On our way into Italy we passed through Switzerland, with its high mountains, their snowy peaks lost in the clouds, its rushing torrents, and its deep valleys filled with giant ferns and purple heather. Great good was wrought in my soul by these beauties of nature so abundantly scattered abroad. They lifted it to Him Who had been pleased to lavish such masterpieces upon this transient earth.

Sometimes we were high up the mountain side, while at our feet an unfathomable abyss seemed ready to engulf us. A little later we were passing through a charming village with its cottages and graceful belfry, above which light fleecy clouds floated lazily. Farther on a great lake with its blue waters, so calm and clear, would blend with the glowing splendor of the setting sun. I cannot tell you how deeply I was impressed with this scenery so full of poetry and grandeur. It was a foretaste of the wonders of Heaven. Then the thought of

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[23] Montmartre—the Mount of Martyrs—is the bill whereon St. Denis, apostle and bishop of Paris, was martyred with his two companions in the third century. It was a famous place of pilgrimage in medieval times, and here St. Ignatius and the first Jesuits took their vows. Under the presidency of Marshal MacMahon, the erection of the well-known Basilica was voted in 1873 by the French chamber of Deputies as a national act of reparation to the Sacred Heart.

religious life would come before me, as it really is, with its constraints and its little daily sacrifices made in secret. I understood how easily one might become wrapped in self and forget the sublime end of one's vocation, and I thought: "Later on, when the time of trial comes, when I am enclosed in the Carmel and shall only be able to see a little bit of sky, I will remember this day and it will encourage me. I will make light of my own small interests by thinking of the greatness and majesty of God; I will love Him alone, and will not be so foolish as to attach myself to the fleeting trifles of this world, now that my heart has had a glimpse of what is reserved for those who love Him."

After having contemplated the works of God, I turned next to admire those of His creatures. Milan was the first Italian town we visited, and we carefully studied its Cathedral of white marble, adorned with countless statues. Céline and I left the timid ones, who hid their faces in fear after climbing to the first stage, and, following the bolder pilgrims, we reached the top, from whence we viewed the city below. When we came down we started on the first of our expeditions; these lasted the whole month of the pilgrimage, and quite cured me of a desire to be always lazily riding in a carriage.

The "Campo Santo" [cemetery] charmed us. The whole vast enclosure is covered with marble statues, so exquisitely carved as to be life-like, and placed with an apparent negligence that only enhances their charm. You feel almost tempted to console the imaginary personages that surround you, their expression so exactly portrays a calm and Christian sorrow. And what works of art! Here is a child putting flowers on its father's grave—one forgets how solid is marble—the delicate petals appear to slip through its fingers. Sometimes the light veils of the widows, and the ribbons of the young girls, seem floating on the breeze.

We could not find words to express our admiration, but an old gentleman who followed us everywhere—regretting no doubt his inability to share our sentiments—said in a tone of ill-temper: "Oh, what enthusiasts these French people are!" and yet he also was French. I think the poor man would have done better to stay at home. Instead of enjoying the journey he was always grumbling: nothing pleased him, neither cities, hotels, people, nor anything else. My Father, whose disposition was the exact opposite, was quite content, no matter what happened, and tried to cheer our friend, offering him his place in the carriage or elsewhere, and with his wonted goodness encouraging him to look on the bright side of things. But nothing could cheer him. How many different kinds of people we saw and how interesting it is to study the world when one is just about to leave it!

In Venice the scene changed completely. Instead of the bustle of a large city, silence reigned, broken only by the lapping of the waters and the cries of the gondoliers as they plied their oars; it is a city full of charm but full of sadness. Even the Palace of the Doges, splendid though it be, is sad; we walked though halls whose vaulted roofs have long since ceased to re-echo the voices of the governors in their sentences of life and death. Its dark dungeons are no longer a living tomb for unfortunate prisoners to pine within.

While visiting these dreadful prisons I fancied myself in the times of the martyrs, and gladly would I have chosen this somber abode for my dwelling if there had been any question of confessing my faith. Presently the guide's voice roused me from my reverie, and I crossed the "Bridge of Sighs," so called because of the sighs uttered by the wretched prisoners as they passed from their dungeons to sentence and to death. After leaving Venice we visited Padua and there venerated the relic of St. Anthony's tongue; then Bologna,

where St. Catherine's body rests. Her face still bears the impress of the kiss bestowed on her by the Infant Jesus.

I was indeed happy when on the way to Loreto. Our Lady has chosen an ideal spot in which to place her Holy House. Everything is poor, simple, and primitive; the women still wear the graceful dress of the country and have not, as in the large towns, adopted the modern Paris fashions. I found Loreto enchanting. And what shall I say of the Holy House? I was overwhelmed with emotion when I realized that I was under the very roof that had sheltered the Holy Family. I gazed on the same walls Our Lord had looked on. I trod the ground once moistened with the sweat of St. Joseph's toil, and saw the little chamber of the Annunciation, where the Blessed Virgin Mary held Jesus in her arms after she had borne Him there in her virginal womb. I even put my Rosary into the little porringer used by the Divine Child. How sweet those memories!

But our greatest joy was to receive Jesus in His own House, and thus become His living temple in the very place which He had honored by His Divine Presence. According to Roman custom the Blessed Sacrament is reserved at one Altar in each Church, and there only is it given to the faithful. At Loreto this Altar was in the Basilica—which is built round the Holy House, enclosing it as a precious stone might be enclosed in a casket of white marble. The exterior mattered little to us, it was in the diamond itself that we wished to receive the Bread of Angels. My Father, with his habitual gentleness, followed the other pilgrims, but his daughters, less easily satisfied, went towards the Holy House.

God favoured us, for a Priest was on the point of celebrating Mass; we told him of our great wish, and he immediately asked for two hosts, which he placed on the paten. You may picture, dear Mother, the ecstatic happiness of that Communion; no words can describe it. What will be our joy when we communicate eternally in the dwelling of the King of Heaven? It will be undimmed by the grief of parting, and will know no end. His House will be ours for all eternity, and there will be no need to covet fragments from the walls hallowed by the Divine Presence. He will not give us His earthly Home—He only shows it to us to make us love poverty and the hidden life. What He has in store for us is the Palace of His Glory, where we shall no longer see Him veiled under the form of a child or the appearance of bread, but as He is, in the brightness of His Infinite Beauty.

Now I am going to tell you about Rome—Rome, where I thought to find comfort and where I found the cross. It was night when we arrived. I was asleep, and was awakened by the porters calling: "Roma !" The pilgrims caught up the cry and repeated: "Roma, Roma!" Then I knew that it was not a dream, I was really in Rome!

Our first day, and perhaps the most enjoyable, was spent outside the walls. There, everything retains its stamp of antiquity, whilst in Rome, with its hotels and shops, one might fancy oneself in Paris. This drive in the Roman Campagna has left a specially delightful impression on my mind.

How shall I describe the feelings which thrilled me when I gazed on the Coliseum? At last I saw the arena where so many Martyrs had shed their blood for Christ. My first impulse was to kiss the ground sanctified by their glorious combats. But what a disappointment! The soil has been raised, and the real arena is now buried at the depth of about twenty-six feet.

As the result of excavations the center is nothing but a mass of rubbish, and an insurmountable barrier guards the entrance; in any case no one dare penetrate into the

midst of these dangerous ruins. But was it possible to be in Rome and not go down to the real Coliseum? No, indeed! and I no longer listened to the guide's explanations: one thought only filled my mind—I must reach the arena.

We are told in the Gospel that St. Mary Magdalen remained close to the Sepulchre and stooped down constantly to look in; she was rewarded by seeing two Angels. So, like her, I kept stooping down and I saw, not two Angels, but what I was in search of. I uttered a cry of joy and called out to my sister: "Come follow me, we shall be able to get through." We hurried on at once, scrambling over the ruins which crumbled under our feet. Papa, aghast at our boldness, called out to us, but we did not hear.

As the warriors of old felt their courage grow in face of peril, so our joy increased in proportion to the fatigue and danger we had to face to attain the object of our desires. Céline, more foreseeing than I, had listened to the guide. She remembered that he had pointed out a particular stone marked with a cross, and had told us it was the place where the Martyrs had fought the good fight. She set to work to find it, and having done so we threw ourselves on our knees on this sacred ground. Our souls united in one and the same prayer. My heart beat violently when I pressed my lips to the dust reddened with the blood of the early Christians. I begged for the grace to be a martyr for Jesus, and I felt in the depths of my heart that my prayer was heard. All this took but a short time. After collecting some stones we approached the walls once more to face the danger. We were so happy that Papa had not the heart to scold us, and I could see that he was proud of our courage.

From the Coliseum we went to the Catacombs, and there Céline and I hid ourselves down in what had once been the tomb of St. Cecilia, and took some of the earth sanctified by her holy remains. Before our journey to Rome I had not felt any special devotion to St. Cecilia, but on visiting the house where she was martyred, and hearing her proclaimed "Queen of harmony"—because of the sweet song she sang in her heart to her Divine Spouse—I felt more than devotion towards her, it was real love as for a friend. She became my chosen patroness, and the keeper of all my secrets; her abandonment to God and her boundless confidence delighted me beyond measure. They were so great that they enabled her to make souls pure which had never till then desired aught but earthly pleasures.

St. Cecilia is like the Spouse in the Canticles. I find in her the Scriptural "choir in an armed camp." (cf. Song of Solomon 6:13). Her life was one melodious song in the midst of the greatest trials; and this is not strange, because we read that "the Book of the Holy Gospels lay ever on her heart,"[24] while in her heart reposed the Spouse of Virgins.

Our visit to the Church of St. Agnes was also very delightful. I tried, but without success, to obtain a relic to take back to my little Mother, Sister Agnes of Jesus. Men refused me, but God Himself came to my aid: a little bit of red marble, from an ancient mosaic dating back to the time of the sweet martyr, fell at my feet. Was this not touching? St. Agnes herself gave me a keepsake from her house.

We spent six days in visiting the great wonders in Rome, and on the seventh saw the greatest of all—Leo XIII. I longed for, yet dreaded, that day, for on it depended my vocation. I had received no answer from the Bishop of Bayeux, and so the Holy Father's permission was my one and only hope. But in order to obtain this permission I had first to

[24] Office of St. Cecilia.

ask it. The mere thought made me tremble, for I must dare speak to the Pope, and that, in presence of many Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops!

On Sunday morning, November 20, we went to the Vatican, and were taken to the Pope's private chapel. At eight o'clock we assisted at his Mass, during which his fervent piety, worthy of the Vicar of Christ, gave evidence that he was in truth the "Holy Father."

The Gospel for that day contained these touching words: "Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a Kingdom." (Luke 12:32). My heart was filled with perfect confidence. No, I would not fear, I would trust that the Kingdom of the Carmel would soon be mine. I did not think of those other words of Our Lord: "I dispose to you, as my Father hath disposed to Me, a Kingdom." (Luke 22:29). That is to say, I will give you crosses and trials, and thus will you become worthy to possess My Kingdom. If you desire to sit on His right Hand you must drink the chalice which He has drunk Himself. (cf. Mt 20:22). " 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?' " (Luke 24:26).

A Mass of thanksgiving followed, and then the audience began. Leo XIII, whose cassock and cape were of white, was seated on a raised chair, and round him were grouped various dignitaries of the Church. According to custom each visitor knelt in turn and kissed, first the foot and next the hand of the venerable Pontiff, and finally received his blessing; then two of the Noble Guard signed to the pilgrim that he must rise and pass on to the adjoining room to make way for those who followed.

No one uttered a word, but I was firmly determined to speak, when suddenly the Vicar-General of Bayeux, Father Révérony, who was standing at the Pope's right hand, told us in a loud voice that he absolutely forbade anyone to address the Holy Father. My heart beat fast. I turned to Céline, mutely inquiring what I should do. "Speak!" she said.

The next moment I found myself on my knees before the Holy Father. I kissed his foot and he held out his hand; then raising my eyes, which were filled with tears, I said entreatingly: "Holy Father, I have a great favour to ask you." At once he bent towards me till his face almost touched mine, and his piercing black eyes seemed to read my very soul. "Holy Father," I repeated, "in honor of your jubilee, will you allow me to enter the Carmel when I am fifteen?"

The Vicar-General, surprised and displeased, said quickly: "Holy Father, this is a child who desires to become a Carmelite, but the Superiors of the Carmel are looking into the matter." "Well, my child," said His Holiness, "do whatever the Superiors decide." Clasping my hands and resting them on his knee, I made a final effort: "Holy Father, if only you say 'yes,' everyone else would agree."

He looked at me fixedly and said clearly and emphatically: "Well, well! you will enter if it is God's Will." I was going to speak again, when the Noble Guards motioned to me. As I paid little attention they came forward, the Vicar-General with them, for I was still kneeling before the Pope with my hands resting on his knee. Just as I was forced to rise, the dear Holy Father gently placed his hand on my lips, then lifted it to bless me, letting his eyes follow me for quite a long time.

My Father was much distressed to find me coming from the audience in tears; he had passed out before me, and so did not know anything about my request. The Vicar-General had shown him unusual kindness, presenting him to Leo XIII as the father of two Carmelites. The Sovereign Pontiff, as a special sign of benevolence, had placed his hand on

his head, thus appearing in the name of Christ Himself to mark him with a mysterious seal. But now that this father of four Carmelites is in Heaven, it is no longer the hand of Christ's Vicar which rests on his brow, prophesying his martyrdom: it is the hand of the Spouse of Virgins, of the King of Heaven; and this Divine Hand will never be taken away from the head which it has blessed.

This trial was indeed a heavy one, but I must admit that in spite of my tears I felt a deep inward peace, for I had made every effort in my power to respond to the appeal of my Divine Master. This peace, however, dwelt in the depths of my soul—on the surface all was bitterness; and Jesus was silent—absent it would seem, for nothing revealed that He was there.

On that day, too, the sun dared not shine, and the beautiful blue sky of Italy, hidden by dark clouds, mingled its tears with mine. All was at an end. My journey had no further charm for me since it had failed in its object. It is true the Holy Father's words: "You will enter if it is God's Will," should have consoled me, they were indeed a prophecy. In spite of all these obstacles, what God in His goodness willed, has come to pass. He has not allowed His creatures to do what they will but only what He wills. Sometime before this took place I had offered myself to the Child Jesus to be His little plaything. I told Him not to treat me like one of those precious toys which children only look at and dare not touch, but to treat me like a little ball of no value, that could be thrown on the ground, kicked about, pierced, left in a corner, or pressed to His Heart just as it might please Him. In a word I wished to amuse the Holy Child and to let Him play with me as He fancied. Here indeed He was answering my prayer. In Rome Jesus pierced His little plaything. He wanted to see what was inside . . . and when satisfied, He let it drop and went to sleep. What was He doing during His sweet slumber, and what became of the ball thus cast on one side? He dreamed that He was still at play, that He took it up or threw it down, that He rolled it far away, but at last He pressed it to His Heart, nor did He allow it again to slip from His tiny Hand. Dear Mother, you can imagine the sadness of the little ball lying neglected on the ground! And yet it continued to hope against hope.

After our audience my Father went to call on Joseph's College—and there he met Father Révérony. He reproached him gently for not having helped me in my difficult task, and told the whole story to Brother Simeon. The good old man listened with much interest and even made notes, saying with evident feeling: "This kind of thing is not seen in Italy."

The next day we started for Naples and Pompeii. Vesuvius did us the honor of emitting from its crater a thick volume of smoke, accompanied by numerous loud reports. The traces of the devastation of Pompeii are terrifying. They show forth the power of God: "He looks upon the earth, and makes it tremble; He touches the mountains and they smoke." (Psalms 104:32).

I should like to have wandered alone among its ruins, meditating on the instability of human things, but such solitude was not to be thought of.

At Naples we made an expedition to the monastery of San Martino; it crowns a high hill overlooking the whole city. On the way back the horses took the bit in their teeth, and it is solely to our Guardian Angels that I attribute our safe return to the splendid hotel. This word "splendid" is not too strong to describe it; in fact during the whole journey we stayed only at the most expensive hotels. I had never been surrounded by such luxury, but it is indeed a true saying that riches do not make happiness. I should have been a thousand

times more contented under a thatched roof, with the hope of entering the Carmel, than I was amid marble staircases, gilded ceilings, and silken hangings, with my heart full of sorrow.

I realized thoroughly that joy is not found in the things which surround us, but lives only in the soul. One could possess it as well in an obscure prison as in the palace of a king. And so now I am happier at the Carmel, in the midst of trials within and without, than I was in the world where I had everything I wanted, and, above all, the joys of a happy home.

Although I felt heavy of heart, outwardly I was as usual, for I thought no one had any knowledge of my petition to the Pope. I was mistaken. One day, when the other pilgrims had gone to the refreshment-room and Céline and I were alone, Mgr. Legoux came to the door of the carriage. He looked at me attentively and smiling said: "Well, and how is our little Carmelite?" This showed me that my secret was known to all the pilgrims, and I gathered it, too, from their kindly looks; but happily no one spoke to me on the subject.

At Assisi I had a little adventure. While visiting the places sanctified by the virtues of St. Francis and St. Claire I lost the buckle of my belt in the monastery. It took me some time to find and put it back in place, and when I reached the door all the carriages had started except one; that belonged to the Vicar-General of Bayeux! Should I run after those which were no longer in sight and so perhaps miss the train, or should I beg for a seat in the carriage of Father Révérony? I decided that this was the wiser plan.

I tried to hide my extreme embarrassment and explained things. He was placed in a difficulty him-self, for all the seats were occupied, but one of the party promptly gave me his place and sat by the driver. I felt like a squirrel caught in a snare. I was ill at ease in the midst of these great people, and I had to sit face to face with the most formidable of them all. He was exceedingly kind, however, and now and then interrupted his conversation to talk to me about the Carmel and promise that he would do all in his power to realize my desire of entering at fifteen. This meeting was like balm to my wounds, though it did not prevent me from suffering. I had now lost all trust in creatures and could only lean on God Himself.

And yet my distress did not hinder me from taking a deep interest in the holy places we visited. In Florence we saw the shrine of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, in the choir of the Carmelite Church. All the pilgrims wanted to touch the Saint's tomb with their Rosaries, but my hand was the only one small enough to pass through the grating. So I was deputed for this important and lengthy task, and I did it with pride.

It was not the first time I had obtained special favours. One day, at Santa Croce, in Rome, we venerated the relics of the True Cross, together with two of the Thorns, and one of the Sacred Nails. I wanted to examine them closely, so I remained behind, and when the monk in charge was going to replace them on the Altar, I asked if I might touch the precious treasures. He said I might do so, but was doubtful if I should succeed; however, I put my little finger into one of the openings of the reliquary and was able to touch the Sacred Nail once hallowed by the Blood of Our Saviour. You see I behaved towards Him like a child who thinks it may do as it pleases and looks on its Father's treasures as its own.

Having passed through Pisa and Genoa we came back to France by one of the loveliest routes. At times we were close to the sea, and one day during a storm it seemed as though the waves would reach the train. Farther on we traveled through plains covered with orange trees, olives, and feathery palms, while at night the numerous seaports twinkled

with lights, and stars came out in the deep blue sky. But I watched the fairy picture fade away from my eyes without any regret—my heart was set elsewhere.

My Father proposed to take me to Jerusalem, but in spite of the natural wish I had to visit the places sanctified by Our Lord's Footsteps, I was weary of earthly pilgrimages and only longed for the beauties of Heaven. In order to win these beauties for souls I wanted to become a prisoner as quickly as possible. I felt that I must suffer and struggle still more before the gates of my blessed prison would open; yet my trust in God did not grow less, and I still hoped to enter at Christmas.

We had hardly reached home when I paid a visit to the Carmel. You must remember well that interview, dear Mother. I left myself entirely in your hands, for I had exhausted all my resources. You told me to write to the Bishop and remind him of his promise. I obeyed at once, and as soon as my letter was posted I felt I should obtain the coveted permission without any delay. Alas! each day brought fresh disappointments. The beautiful feast of Christmas dawned; still Jesus slept. He left His little ball on the ground without even glancing that way.

This was indeed a sore trial, but Our Lord, Whose Heart is always watching, taught me that He grants miracles to those whose faith is small as a grain of mustard seed, in the hope of strengthening this slender faith ; whilst for His intimate friends, for His Mother, He did not work miracles till He had proved their faith. Did He not permit Lazarus to die even though Mary and Martha had sent word that he was sick? And at the marriage feast of Cana, when Our Lady asked her Divine Son to aid the master of the house, did He not answer that His hour had not yet come? But after the trial what a reward! Water is changed into wine, and Lazarus rises from the dead. In this way did my Beloved act with His little Thérèse; after He had tried her for a long time He granted all her desires.

For my New Year's gift of 1888, Jesus again gave me His Cross. You told me, dear Mother, that you had had the Bishop's answer since December 28, the feast of Holy Innocents; that he authorized my immediate entry into the Carmel, but that nevertheless you had decided not to open its doors till after Lent. I could not restrain my tears at the thought of such a long delay. This trial affected me in a special manner, for I felt my earthly ties were severed, and yet the Ark in its turn refused to admit the poor little dove.

How did these three months pass? They were fruitful in sufferings and still more so in other graces. At first the thought came into my mind that I would not put any extra restraint on myself, I would lead a life somewhat less strictly ordered than was my custom. But Our Lord made me understand the benefit I might derive from this time He had granted me, and I then resolved to give myself up to a more serious and mortified life. When I say mortified, I do not mean that I imitated the penances of the Saints; far from resembling those beautiful souls who have practiced all sorts of mortifications from their infancy, I made mine consist in simply checking my inclinations, keeping back an impatient answer, doing little services to those around me without setting store thereby, and a hundred other things of the kind. By practicing these trifles I prepared myself to become the Spouse of Jesus, and I can never tell you, Mother, how much the added delay helped me to grow in abandonment, in humility, and in other virtues.

Chapter 7

The Little Flower Enters the Carmel

Monday, April 9, 1888, being the Feast of the Annunciation, transferred from Passiontide, was the day chosen for me to enter the Carmel. On the evening before, we were gathered around the table where I was to take my place for the last time. These farewells are in themselves heart-rending, and just when I would have liked to be forgotten I received the tenderest expressions of affection, as if to increase the pain of parting.

The next morning, after a last look at the happy home of my childhood, I set out for the Carmel, where we all heard Mass. At the moment of Communion, when Jesus had entered our hearts, I heard sobs on all sides. I did not shed a tear, but as I led the way to the cloister door my heart beat so violently that I wondered if I were going to die. Oh, the agony of that moment! One must have experienced it in order to understand.

I embraced all my dear ones and knelt for my Father's blessing. He, too, knelt down and blessed me through his tears. It was a sight to gladden the Angels, this old man giving his child to God while she was yet in the springtime of life. At length the doors of the Carmel closed upon me. . . . I found a welcome in your arms, dear Mother, and received the embraces of another family, whose devotedness and love is not dreamt of by the outside world.

At last my desires were realized, and I cannot describe the deep sweet peace which filled my soul. This peace has remained with me during the eight and a half years of my life here, and has never left me even amid the greatest trials.

Everything in the Convent delighted me, especially our little cell.[25] I fancied myself transported to the desert. I repeat that my happiness was calm and peaceful—not even the lightest breeze ruffled the tranquil waters on which my little barque sailed; no cloud darkened the blue sky. I felt fully recompensed for all I had gone through, and I kept saying: "Now I am here for ever." Mine was no passing joy, it did not fade like first illusions. From illusions God in His Mercy has ever preserved me. I found the religious life just what I expected, and sacrifice was never a matter of surprise. Yet you know well that from the beginning my way was strewn with thorns rather than with roses.

In the first place, my soul had for its daily food the bread of spiritual dryness. Then, too, dear Mother, Our Lord allowed you, unconsciously, to treat me very severely. You found fault with me whenever you met me. I remember once I had left a cobweb in the cloister, and you said to me before the whole community: "It is easy to see that our cloisters are swept by a child of fifteen. It is disgraceful! Go and sweep away that cobweb, and be more careful in future."

On the rare occasions when I spent an hour with you for spiritual direction, you seemed to be scolding me nearly all the time, and what pained me most of all was that I did not see

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[25] Nuns, in the spirit of poverty, avoid using the word *my*, as denoting private possessions; so, later on, "our lamp," "our handkerchief," will occur.

how to correct my faults: for instance, my slow ways and want of thoroughness in my duties, faults which you were careful to point out.

One day it occurred to me that you would certainly prefer me to spend my free time in work instead of in prayer, as was my custom; so I plied my needle industriously without even raising my eyes. No one ever knew of this, as I wished to be faithful to Our Lord and do things solely for Him to see.

While I was a postulant our Mistress used to send me every afternoon at half-past four to weed the garden. This was a real penance, the more so, dear Mother, because I was almost sure to meet you on the way, and once you remarked: "Really, this child does absolutely nothing. What are we to think of a novice who must have a walk every day?" And it was in this way you invariably dealt with me. And yet, dear Mother, how grateful I am to you for giving me such a sound and valuable training. It was an inestimable grace. What should I have become, if, as the world outside believed, I had been but the pet of the Community? Perhaps, instead of seeing Our Lord in the person of my superiors, I should only have considered the creature, and my heart, which had been so carefully guarded in the world, would have been ensnared by human affection in the cloister. Happily, your motherly prudence saved me from such a disaster.

And not only in this matter, but in other and more bitter trials, I can truly say that Suffering opened her arms to me from the first, and I took her to my heart. In the solemn examination before my profession I declared—as was customary—the reason of my entry into the Carmel: "I have come to save souls, and especially to pray for Priests." One cannot attain the end without adopting the means, and as Our Lord made me understand that it was by the Cross He would give me souls, the more crosses I met with, the stronger grew my attraction to suffering. For five years this way was mine, but I alone knew it; this was precisely the flower I wished to offer to Jesus, a hidden flower which keeps its perfume only for Heaven.

Two months after my entry Father Pichon was surprised at the workings of grace in my soul; he thought my piety childlike and my path an easy one. My conversation with this good Father would have brought me great comfort, had it not been for the extreme difficulty I found in opening my heart. Nevertheless I made a general confession, and after it he said to me: "Before God, the Blessed Virgin, the Angels, and all the Saints, I declare that you have never committed a mortal sin. Thank God for the favours He has so freely bestowed on you without any merit on your part."

Without any merit on my part! That was not difficult to believe. Fully conscious of my weakness and imperfection, my heart overflowed with gratitude. I had distressed myself, fearing I might have stained my baptismal robe, and this assurance, coming as it did from the lips of a director, a man of wisdom and holiness, such as our Mother St. Teresa desired, seemed to come from God Himself. Father Pichon added: "May Our Lord always be your Superior and your Novice Master!" And indeed He ever was, and likewise my Director. In saying this I do not mean to imply that I was not communicative with my superiors; far from being reserved, I always tried to be as an open book.

Our Mistress was a true saint, the perfect type of the first Carmelites, and I seldom left her side, for she had to teach me how to work. Her kindness was beyond words, I loved and appreciated her, and yet my soul did not expand. I could not explain myself, words failed me, and so the time of spiritual direction became a veritable martyrdom.

One of the older nuns seemed to understand what I felt, for she once said to me during recreation: "I should think, child, you have not much to tell your superiors." "Why do you think that, dear Mother ? " I asked. "Because your soul is very simple; but when you are perfect you will become more simple still. The nearer one approaches God, the simpler one becomes."

This good Mother was right. Nevertheless the great difficulty I found in opening my heart, though it came from simplicity, was a genuine trial. Now, however, without having lost my simplicity, I am able to express my thoughts with the greatest ease.

I have already said that Our Lord Himself had acted as my Spiritual Guide. Hardly had Father Pichon become my director when his Superiors sent him to Canada. I was only able to hear from him once in the year, so now the Little Flower which had been transplanted to the mountain of Carmel quickly turned to the Director of Directors, and unfolded itself under the shadow of His Cross, having for refreshing dew His Tears, His Precious Blood, and for radiant sun His Adorable Face.

Until then I had not appreciated the beauties of the Holy Face; it was my dear Mother, Agnes of Jesus, who unveiled them to me. As she had been the first of her sisters to enter the Carmel, so she was the first to penetrate the mysteries of love hidden in the Face of Our Divine Spouse. Then she showed them to me and I understood better than ever, in what true glory consists. He whose "Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36) taught me that the only royalty to be coveted lies in being "unknown and esteemed as naught,"[26] and in the joy of self-abasement. And I wished that my face, like the Face of Jesus, "should be, as it were, hidden and despised," (cf. Isaiah 53:3) so that no one on earth should esteem me. I thirsted to suffer and to be forgotten.

Most merciful has been the way by which the Divine Master has ever led me. He has never inspired me with any desire and left it unsatisfied, and that is why I have always found His bitter chalice full of sweetness.

At the end of May, Marie, our eldest, was professed, and Thérèse, the Benjamin, had the privilege of crowning her with roses on the day of her mystical espousals. After this happy feast, trials again came upon us. Ever since his first attack of paralysis, we realized that my Father was very easily tired. During our journey to Rome, I often noticed that he seemed exhausted and in pain. But, above all, I remarked his progress in the path of holiness; he had succeeded in obtaining a complete mastery over the impetuosity of his natural disposition, and earthly things were unable to ruffle his calm. Let me give you an instance.

During our pilgrimage we were in the train for days and nights together, and to wile away the time our companions played cards, and occasionally grew very noisy. One day they asked us to join them, but we refused, saying we knew little about the game; we did not find the time long—only too short, indeed, to enjoy the beautiful views which opened before us. Presently their annoyance became evident, and then dear Papa began quietly to defend us, pointing out that as we were on pilgrimage, more of our time might be given to prayer.

One of the players, forgetting the respect due to age, called out thoughtlessly: "Thank God, Pharisees are rare!" My Father did not answer a word, he even seemed pleased; and later on he found an opportunity of shaking hands with this man, and of speaking so

[26] Imitation of Christ

pleasantly that the latter must have thought his rude words had either not been heard, or at least were forgotten.

His habit of forgiveness did not date from this day; my Mother and all who knew him bore witness that no uncharitable word ever passed his lips.

His faith and generosity were likewise equal to any trial. This is how he announced my departure to one of his friends: "Thérèse, my little Queen, entered the Carmel yesterday. God alone could ask such a sacrifice; but He helps me so mightily that even in the midst of tears my heart is overflowing with joy."

This faithful servant must needs receive a reward worthy of his virtues, and he himself claimed that reward. You remember the interview when he said to us: "Children, I have just come back from Alençon, and there, in the Church of Notre Dame, I received such graces and consolations that I made this prayer: 'My God, it is too much, yes, I am too happy; I shall not get to Heaven like this, I wish to suffer something for Thee—and I offered myself as a . . .' " the word *victim* died on his lips. He dared not pronounce it before us, but we understood. You know, dear Mother, the story of our trial; I need not recall its sorrowful details.

And now my clothing day drew near. Contrary to all expectations, my Father had recovered from a second attack, and the Bishop fixed the ceremony for January 10. The time of waiting had been long indeed, but now what a beautiful feast! Nothing was wanting, not even snow.

Do you remember my telling you, dear Mother, how fond I am of snow? While I was still quite small, its whiteness entranced me. Why had I such a fancy for snow? Perhaps it was because, being a little winter flower, my eyes first saw the earth clad in its beautiful white mantle. So, on my clothing day, I wished to see it decked, like myself, in spotless white. The weather was so mild that it might have been spring, and I no longer dared hope for snow. The morning of the feast brought no change and I gave up my childish desire, as impossible to be realized. My Father came to meet me at the enclosure door, his eyes full of tears, and pressing me to his heart exclaimed: "Ah! here is my little Queen!" Then, giving me his arm, we made our solemn entry into the public Chapel. This was his day of triumph, his last feast on earth; now his sacrifice was complete, and his children belonged to God.[27] Céline had already confided to him that later on she also wished to leave the world for the Carmel. On hearing this he was beside himself with joy: "Let us go before the Blessed Sacrament," he said, "and thank God for all the graces He has granted us and the honor He has paid me in choosing His Spouses from my household. God has indeed done me great honor in asking for my children. If I possessed anything better I would hasten to offer it to Him." That something better was himself, "and God received him as a victim of holocaust; He tried him as gold in the furnace, and found him worthy of Himself." (cf. Wisdom 3:5-6).

After the ceremony in the Chapel, I re-entered the Convent and the Bishop intoned the *Te Deum*. One of the Priests observed to him that this hymn of thanksgiving was only sung at professions, but, once begun, it was continued to the end. Was it not right that this feast should be complete, since in it all other joyful days were reunited ?

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[27] Léonie, having entered an order too severe for her delicate health, had been obliged to return home to her Father. Later she became a Visitation nun at Caen, and took the name of Sister Frances Teresa.

The instant I set foot in the enclosure again my eyes fell on the statue of the Child Jesus smiling on me amid the flowers and lights; then, turning towards the quadrangle, I saw that, in spite of the mildness of the weather, it was covered with snow. What a delicate attention on the part of Jesus! Gratifying the least wish of His little Spouse, He even sent her this. Where is the creature so mighty that he can make one flake of it fail to please his beloved?

Everyone was amazed, and since then many people, hearing of my desire, have described this event as "the little miracle" of my clothing day, and thought it strange I should be so fond of snow. So much the better, it shows still more the wonderful condescension of the Spouse of Virgins—of Him Who loves lilies white as the snow. After the ceremony the Bishop entered. He gave me many proofs of his fatherly tenderness, and, in presence of all the Priests, spoke of my visit to Bayeux and the journey to Rome; nor did he forget to tell them how I had put up my hair before visiting him. Then, laying his hand on my head, he blessed me affectionately. My mind dwelt with ineffable sweetness on the caresses Our Lord will soon lavish upon me before all the Saints, and this consoling thought was a foretaste of Heaven.

I have just said that January 10 was a day of triumph for my dear Father. I liken it to the feast of the entry of Christ into Jerusalem, on Palm Sunday. As in the case of Our Divine Master, his day of triumph was followed by long days of sorrow; and, even as the agony of Jesus pierced the heart of His divine Mother, so our hearts were deeply wounded by the humiliations and sufferings of him, whom we loved best on earth. . . . I remember that in the month of June, 1888, when we were fearing another stroke of paralysis, I surprised our Novice Mistress by saying: "I am suffering a great deal, Mother, yet I feel I can suffer still more." I did not then foresee the trial awaiting us. I did not know that on February 12, one month after my clothing day, our beloved Father would drink so deeply of such a bitter chalice. I no longer said I could suffer more, words cannot express our grief; nor shall I attempt to describe it here.

In Heaven, we shall enjoy dwelling on these dark days of exile. Yet the three years of my Father's martyrdom seem to me the sweetest and most fruitful of our lives. I would not exchange them for the most sublime ecstasies, and my heart cries out in gratitude for such a priceless treasure: "We have rejoiced for the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us." (cf. Psalms 90:15). Precious and sweet was this bitter cross, and our hearts only breathed out sighs of grateful love. We no longer walked—we ran, we flew along the path of perfection.

Léonie and Céline, though living in the world, were no longer of the world. The letters they wrote to us at this time are full of the most edifying resignation. And what talks I had with Céline! Far from separating us, the grating of the Carmel united us more closely: the same thoughts, the same desires, the same love for Our Lord and for souls, made our very life. Not a word concerning things of earth entered into our conversation; but, just as in former days, we lifted longing eyes to Heaven, so now our hearts strained after the joys beyond time and space, and, for the sake of an eternal happiness, we chose to suffer and be despised here below.

Though my suffering seemed to have reached its height, yet my attraction thereto did not grow less, and soon my soul shared in the trials my heart had to bear. My spiritual aridity increased, and I found no comfort either in Heaven or on earth; yet, amid these waters of tribulation that I had so thirsted for, I was the happiest of mortals.

Thus passed the time of my betrothal, too long a time for me. At the end of the year you told me, dear Mother, that I must not yet think of my profession, as our Ecclesiastical Superior expressly forbade it. I had therefore to wait for eight months more. At first I found it very difficult to be resigned to such a sacrifice, but divine light penetrated my soul before long.

At this time, I was using for my meditations Surin's *Foundations of the Spiritual life*. One day during prayer, it was brought home to me that my too eager desire to take my vows was mingled with much self-love; as I belonged to Our Lord and was His little plaything to console and please Him, it was for me to do His Will, not for Him to do mine. I also understood that a bride would not be pleasing to the bridegroom on her wedding day were she not magnificently attired. But, what had I made ready? So I said to Our Lord: "I do not ask Thee to hasten the day of my profession, I will wait as long as Thou pleasest, only I cannot bear that through any fault of mine my union with Thee should be delayed; I will set to work and carefully prepare a wedding-dress enriched with diamonds and precious stones, and, when Thou findest it sufficiently rich, I am sure that nothing will keep Thee from accepting me as Thy Spouse."

I took up the task with renewed zest. Since my clothing day, I had received abundant lights on religious perfection, chiefly concerning the vow of poverty. While I was a postulant, I liked to have nice things to use and to find everything needful ready to hand. Jesus bore with me patiently, for He does not unfold everything at once to the soul. He gives His light little by little. At the beginning of my spiritual life, about the age of fourteen, I used to ask myself how, in days to come, I should more clearly understand the true meaning of perfection. I imagined I then understood it completely, but I soon came to realize that the more one advances along this path the farther one seems from the goal, and now I am resigned to be always imperfect, and I even find joy therein.

To return to the lessons which Our Lord taught me. One evening after Compline I searched in vain for our lamp on the shelves where they are kept, and, as it was the time of the "Great Silence," I could not recover it. I guessed rightly that a Sister, believing it to be her own, had taken it; but just on that evening I had counted much on doing some work, and was I to spend a whole hour in the dark on account of this mistake? Without the interior light of grace I should undoubtedly have pitied myself, but, with that light, I felt happy instead of aggrieved, and reflected that poverty consists in being deprived not only of what is convenient, but of what is necessary. And, in this exterior darkness, I found my soul illumined by a brightness that was divine.

At this time I was seized with a craving for whatever was ugly and inconvenient; and was thus quite pleased when a pretty little jug was taken from our cell and a large chipped one put in its place. I also tried hard not to make excuses, but I found this very difficult, especially with our Mistress; from her I did not like to hide anything.

My first victory was not a great one, but it cost me a good deal. A small jar, left behind a window, was found broken. No one knew who had put it there, but our Mistress was displeased, and, thinking I was to blame in leaving it about, told me I was very untidy and must be more careful in future. Without answering, I kissed the ground and promised to be more observant. I was so little advanced in virtue that these small sacrifices cost me dear, and I had to console myself with the thought that at the day of Judgment all would be known.

Above all I endeavored to practice little hidden acts of virtue; thus I took pleasure in folding the mantles forgotten by the Sisters, and I sought for every possible occasion of helping them. One of God's gifts was a great attraction towards penance, but I was not permitted to satisfy it; the only mortification allowed me consisted in mortifying my self-love, and this did me far more good than bodily penance would have done.

However, Our Lady helped me with my wedding-dress, and, as soon as it was finished, every obstacle vanished and my profession was fixed for September 8, 1890.

All that I have set down in these few words would take many pages to relate; but those pages will never be read on earth . . . .

Chapter 8

Profession of Saint Thérèse

Need I tell you, dear Mother, about the retreat before my profession? Far from receiving consolation, I went through it in a state of utter dryness and as if abandoned by God. Jesus, as was His wont, slept in my little barque. How rarely do souls suffer Him to sleep in peace! This Good Master is so wearied with continually making fresh advances that He eagerly avails Himself of the repose I offer Him, and, no doubt, He will sleep on until my great and everlasting retreat; but, instead of being grieved at this, I am glad.

In truth I am no Saint, as this frame of mind well shows. I ought not to rejoice in my dryness of soul, but rather attribute it to my want of fervour and fidelity. That I fall asleep so often during meditation, and thanksgiving after Communion, should distress me. Well, I am not distressed. I reflect that little children are equally dear to their parents whether they are asleep or awake; that, in order to perform operations, doctors put their patients to sleep; and finally that "The Lord knows our frame, He remembers that we are but dust." (Psalms 103:14). Yet, apparently barren as was my retreat—and those which followed have been no less so—I unconsciously received many interior lights on the best means of pleasing God, and practicing virtue. I have often observed that Our Lord will not give me any store of provisions, but nourishes me each moment with food that is ever new; I find it within me without knowing how it has come there. I simply believe that it is Jesus Himself hidden in my poor heart, Who is secretly at work, inspiring me with what He wishes me to do as each occasion arises.

Shortly before my profession I received the Holy Father's Blessing, through the hands of Brother Simeon; and this precious Blessing undoubtedly helped me through the most terrible storm of my whole life.

On the eve of the great day, instead of being filled with the customary sweetness, my vocation suddenly seemed to me as unreal as a dream. The devil—for it was he—made me feel sure that I was wholly unsuited for life in the Carmel, and that I was deceiving my superiors by entering on a way to which I was not called. The darkness was so bewildering that I understood but one thing—I had no religious vocation, and must return to the world. I cannot describe the agony I endured. What was I to do in such a difficulty? I chose the right course, deciding to tell my Novice Mistress of the temptation without delay. I sent for her to come out of choir, and, though full of confusion, I confessed the state my soul. Fortunately she saw more clearly than I did, and reassured me completely by laughing frankly at my story. The devil was put to instant flight by my humble avowal; what he wanted was to keep me from speaking, and thus draw me into his snares. But it was my turn now to ensnare him, for, to make my humiliation more complete, I also told you everything, dear Mother, and your consoling words dispelled my last fears.

On the morning of September 8, a wave of peace flooded my soul, and, in "that peace which surpasses all understanding," (Philippians 4:7) I pronounced my holy vows.

Many were the graces I asked. I felt myself truly a queen and took advantage of my title to obtain every favour from the King for His ungrateful subjects. No one was forgotten. I

wished that every sinner on earth might be converted; that on that day Purgatory should set its captives free; and I bore upon my heart this letter containing what I desired for myself:

"O Jesus, my Divine Spouse, grant that my baptismal robe may never be sullied. Take me from this world rather than let me stain my soul by committing the least willful fault. May I never seek or find aught but Thee alone! May all creatures be nothing to me and I nothing to them! May no earthly thing disturb my peace!

"O Jesus, I ask but Peace. . . . Peace, and above all, Love. . . . Love—without limit. Jesus, I ask that for Thy sake I may die a Martyr; give me martyrdom of soul or body. Or rather give me both the one and the other.

"Grant that I may fulfill my engagements in all their perfection; that no one may think of me; that I may be trodden under foot, forgotten, as a little grain of sand. I offer myself to Thee, O my Beloved, that Thou may ever perfectly accomplish in me Thy Holy Will, without let or hindrance from creatures."

When at the close of this glorious day I laid my crown of roses, according to custom, at Our Lady's feet, it was without regret. I felt that time would never lessen my happiness.

It was the Nativity of Mary. What a beautiful feast on which to become the Spouse of Jesus! It was the little new-born Holy Virgin who presented her little Flower to the little Jesus. That day everything was little except the graces I received—except my peace and joy in gazing upon the beautiful star-lit sky at night, and in thinking that soon I should fly away to Heaven and be united to my Divine Spouse amid eternal bliss.

On September 24 took place the ceremony of my receiving the veil. This feast was indeed *veiled* in tears. Papa was too ill to come and bless his little Queen; at the last minute Mgr. Hugonin, who should have presided, was unable to do so, and, for other reasons also, the day was a painful one. And yet amid it all, my soul was profoundly at peace. That day it pleased Our Lord that I should not be able to restrain my tears, and those tears were not understood. It is true I had borne far harder trials without shedding a tear; but then I had been helped by special graces, whilst on this day Jesus left me to myself, and I soon showed my weakness.

Eight days after I had taken the veil my cousin, Jeanne Guérin, was married to Dr. La Néele. When she came to see us afterwards and I heard of all the little attentions she lavished on her husband, my heart thrilled and I thought: "It shall never be said that a woman in the world does more for her husband than I do for Jesus, my Beloved." And, filled with fresh ardor, I set myself more earnestly than ever to please my Heavenly Spouse, the King of Kings, Who had deigned to honor me by a divine affiance.

Having seen the letter announcing the marriage, I amused myself by composing the following invitation, which I read to the novices in order to bring home to them what had struck me so forcibly—that the glory of all earthly unions is as nothing compared to the titles of a Spouse of Our Divine Lord.

"God Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, and the Glorious Virgin Mary, Queen of the Heavenly Court, announce to you the Spiritual Espousals of their August Son, Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with little Thérèse Martin, now Princess and Lady of His Kingdoms of the Holy Childhood and the Passion,

assigned to her as a dowry, by her Divine Spouse, from which Kingdoms she holds her titles of nobility—*of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face*. It was not possible to invite you to the Wedding Feast which took place on the Mountain of Carmel, September 8, 1890—the Heavenly Court was alone admitted—but you are requested to be present at the Wedding Feast which will take place tomorrow, the day of Eternity, when Jesus, the Son of God, will come in the clouds of Heaven, in the splendor of His Majesty, to judge the living and the dead.

"The hour being still uncertain, you are asked to hold yourselves in readiness and watch."[28]

And now, Mother, what more shall I say? It was through your hands that I gave myself to Our Lord, and you have known me from childhood—need I write my secrets? Forgive me if I cut short the story of my religious life.

During the general retreat following my profession I received great graces. As a rule I find preached retreats most trying, but this one was quite an exception. I anticipated so much suffering that I prepared myself by a fervent novena. It was said that the good Priest understood better how to convert sinners than to direct the souls of nuns. Well then, I must be a great sinner, for God made use of this holy religious to bring me much consolation. At that time I had all kinds of interior trials which I found it impossible to explain to anyone; suddenly, I was able to lay open my whole soul. The Father understood me in a marvelous way; he seemed to divine my state, and launched me full sail upon that ocean of confidence and love in which I had longed to advance, but so far had not dared. He told me that my faults did not pain the Good God, and added: "At this moment I hold His place, and I assure you from Him that He is well pleased with your soul." How happy these consoling words made me! I had never been told before that it was possible for faults not to pain the Sacred Heart; the assurance filled me with joy and helped me to bear with patience the exile of this life. It was also the echo of my inmost thoughts. In truth I had long known that the Lord is more tender than a mother, and I have sounded the depths of more than one mother's heart. I know that a mother is ever ready to forgive her child's small thoughtless faults. How often have I not had this sweet experience! No reproach could have touched me more than one single kiss from my Mother. My nature is such that fear makes me shrink, while, under love's sweet rule, I not only advance—I fly.

Two months after this happy retreat our Venerable Foundress, Mother Genevieve of St. Teresa, quitted our little convent to enter the Heavenly Carmel. Before speaking of my impressions at the time of her death, I should like to tell you what a joy it was to have lived for some years with a soul whose holiness was not inimitable, but lay in the practice of simple and hidden virtues. More than once she was to me a source of great consolation.

One Sunday I went to the infirmary to pay her a visit, but, as two of the older nuns were there, I was retiring quietly, when she called me and said, with something of inspiration in her manner: "Wait, my child, I have just a word for you; you are always asking me for a

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[28] This letter, the style of which may seem strange to English ears, is modeled closely on the formal and quaint letters whereby French parents of the better class announce to their friends the marriage of their children. Such letters of "faire-part" are issued in the name of relatives to the third or fourth degree.

spiritual bouquet, well, today I give you this one: Serve the Lord in peace and in joy. Remember that Our God is the God of peace."

I thanked her quite simply and went out of the room. I was moved almost to tears, and was convinced that God had revealed to her the state of my soul. That day I had been sorely tried, almost to sadness. Such was the darkness that I no longer knew if I were beloved of God, and so, dear Mother, you can understand what light and consolation succeeded this gloom.

The following Sunday I asked her whether she had received any revelation about me, but she assured me that she had not, and this only made me admire her the more, for it showed how intimately Jesus lived in her soul and directed her words and actions. Such holiness seems to me the most true, the most holy; it is the holiness I desire, for it is free from all illusion.

On the day when this revered Mother ended her exile, I received a very special grace. It was the first time I had assisted at a death-bed, yet though the sight enchanted me by its beauty, my two hours of watching had made me very drowsy. I was grieved at this, but, at the moment her soul took its flight to Heaven, my feelings were completely changed. In an instant I was filled with an indescribable joy and fervour, as if the soul of our blessed Foundress made me share in the happiness she already enjoyed—for I am quite convinced she went straight to Heaven. I had said to her some time previously: "You will not go to Purgatory, dear Mother." "I hope not," she answered sweetly. Certainly God would not disappoint a hope so full of humility; and the proof that He did not, lies in the many favors we have received.

The Sisters hastened to claim something belonging to our beloved Mother, and you know what precious relic is mine. During her agony I had noticed a tear glistening like a beautiful diamond. That tear, the last she shed on this earth, did not fall, I still saw it shining when her body was exposed in the choir. When evening came, I made bold to approach unseen, with a little piece of linen, and I now have the happiness of possessing the last tear of a Saint.

I attach no importance to my dreams, and indeed, they seldom have any special meaning, though I do often wonder how it is that, as I think of God all the day, my mind does not dwell on Him more in my sleep. Generally I dream of the woods and the flowers, the brooks and the sea, and nearly always of pretty children; or I chase birds and butterflies such as I have never seen. But, if my dreams are sometimes poetical, they are never mystical.

However, one night after Mother Genevieve's death, I had a more consoling one. I thought I saw her giving to each of us something that had belonged to herself. When my turn came, her hands were empty, and I was afraid I was not to receive anything; but she looked at me lovingly, and said three times: "To you I leave my heart."

About a month after that seraphic death, towards the close of the year 1891, an epidemic of influenza raged in the Community; I only had it slightly and was able to be about with two other Sisters. It is impossible to imagine the heartrending state of our Carmel throughout those days of sorrow. The worst sufferers were nursed by those who could hardly drag themselves about; death was all around us, and, when a Sister had breathed her last, we had to leave her instantly.

My nineteenth birthday was saddened by the death of Mother Sub-Prioress; I assisted with the infirmarian during her agony, and two more deaths quickly followed. I now had to do the Sacristy work single-handed, and I wonder sometimes how I was equal to it all.

One morning, when it was time to rise, I had a presentiment that Sister Magdalen was no more. The dormitory was quite in darkness, no one was leaving her cell. I decided, however, to go in to Sister Magdalen, and I found her dressed, but lying dead on her bed. I was not in the least afraid, and running to the Sacristy I quickly brought a blessed candle, and placed on her head a wreath of roses. Amid all this desolation I felt the Hand of God and knew that His Heart was watching over us. Our dear Sisters left this life for a happier one without any struggle; an expression of heavenly joy shone on their faces, and they seemed only to be enjoying a pleasant sleep. During all these long and trying weeks I had the unspeakable consolation of receiving Holy Communion every day. How sweet it was! For a long time Jesus treated me as a spoilt child, for a longer time than His more faithful Spouses. He came to me daily for several months after the influenza had ceased, a privilege not granted to the Community. I had not asked this favour, but I was unspeakably happy to be united day after day to my Beloved.

Great was my joy in being allowed to touch the Sacred Vessels and prepare the Altar linen on which Our Lord was to be laid. I felt that I must increase in fervour, and I often recalled those words addressed to deacons at their ordination: "Be you holy, you who carry the Vessels of the Lord."

What can I tell you, dear Mother, about my thanksgivings after Communion? There is no time when I taste less consolation. But this is what I should expect. I desire to receive Our Lord, not for my own satisfaction, but simply to give Him pleasure.

I picture my soul as a piece of waste ground and beg Our Blessed Lady to take away my imperfections—which are as heaps of rubbish—and to build upon it a splendid tabernacle worthy of Heaven, and adorn it with her own adornments. Then I invite all the Angels and Saints to come and sing canticles of love, and it seems to me that Jesus is well pleased to see Himself received so grandly, and I share in His joy. But all this does not prevent distractions and drowsiness from troubling me, and not infrequently I resolve to continue my thanksgiving throughout the day, since I made it so badly in choir.

You see, dear Mother, that my way is not the way of fear; I can always make myself happy, and profit by my imperfections, and Our Lord Himself encourages me in this path. Once, contrary to my usual custom, I felt troubled when I approached the Holy Table. For several days there had not been a sufficient number of Hosts, and I had only received a small part of one; this morning I foolishly thought: "If the same thing happens to-day, I shall imagine that Jesus does not care to come into my heart." I approached the rails. What a joy awaited me! The Priest hesitated a moment, then gave me two entire Hosts. Was this not a sweet response ?

I have much to be thankful for. I will tell you quite openly what the Lord has done for me. He has shown unto me the same mercy as unto King Solomon. All my desires have been satisfied; not only my desires of perfection, but even those of which I understood the vanity, in theory, if not in practice. I had always looked on Sister Agnes of Jesus as my model, and I wished to be like her in everything. She used to paint exquisite miniatures and

write beautiful poems, and this inspired me with a desire to learn to paint,[29] and express my thoughts in verse, that I might do some good to those around me. But I would not ask for these natural gifts, and my desire remained hidden in my heart.

Jesus, too, had hidden Himself in this poor little heart, and He was pleased to show me once more the vanity of all that passes. To the great astonishment of the Community, I succeeded in painting several pictures and in writing poems which have been a help to certain souls. And just as Solomon, "turning to all the works which his hand had wrought, and to the labors wherein he had labored in vain, saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind," (cf. Ecclesiastes 2:11) so experience showed me that the sole happiness of earth consists in lying hidden, and remaining in total ignorance of created things. I understood that without love even the most brilliant deeds count for nothing. These gifts, which Our Lord lavished upon me, far from doing me any harm, drew me towards Him; I saw that He alone is unchangeable, He alone can fill the vast abyss of my desires.

Talking of my desires, I must tell you about others of quite a different kind, which the Divine Master has also been pleased to grant: childish desires, like the wish for snow on my clothing day. You know, dear Mother, how fond I am of flowers. When I made myself a prisoner at the age of fifteen, I gave up for ever the delight of rambling through meadows bright with the treasures of spring. Well, I never possessed so many flowers as I have had since entering the Carmel, in the world young men present their betrothed with beautiful bouquets, and Jesus did not forget me. For His Altar I received, in abundance, all the flowers I loved best: cornflowers, poppies, marguerites—one little friend only was missing, the purple vetch. I longed to see it again, and at last it came to gladden me and show that, in the least as in the greatest, God gives a hundred-fold, even in this life, to those who have left all for His Love.

But one desire, the dearest of all, and for many reasons the most difficult, remained unfulfilled. It was to see Céline enter the Carmel of Lisieux. However, I had made a sacrifice of my longing, and committed to God alone the future of my loved sister. I was willing she should be sent to far distant lands if it must be so; but I wanted above all things to see her like myself, the Spouse of Jesus. I suffered deeply, aware that she was exposed in the world to dangers I had never even known. My affection for her was maternal rather than sisterly, and I was filled with solicitude for the welfare of her soul.

She was to go one evening with my aunt and cousins to a dance. I know not why, but I felt more anxious than usual, and I shed many tears, imploring Our Lord to hinder her dancing. And this was just what happened; for He did not suffer His little Spouse to dance that evening, although as a rule she did so most gracefully. And, to the astonishment of everyone, her partner, too, found that he was only able to walk gravely up and down with Mademoiselle. The poor young man slipped away in confusion, and did not dare appear again that evening. This unique occurrence increased my confidence in Our Lord, and showed me clearly that He had already set His seal on my sister's brow.

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[29] Thérèse had kept this wish bidden in her heart from the days of her childhood, and later in life she made the following confidence: "I was ten the day Papa told Céline that she was to begin painting lessons. I felt quite envious. Then he turned to me and said: 'Well, little Queen, would you like to learn painting too?' I was going to say: 'Yes, indeed I should,' when Marie remarked that I had not the same taste for it as Céline. She carried her point, and I said nothing, thinking it was a splendid opportunity to make a big sacrifice for Our Lord; I was so anxious to learn, that even now I wonder how I was able to keep silence."

On July 29, 1894., God called my saintly and much-tried Father to Himself. For the last two years of his life he was completely paralyzed; so my uncle took him into his house and surrounded him with the tenderest care. He became quite helpless and was only able to visit us once during the whole course of his illness. It was a sad interview. At the moment of parting, as we said good-bye, he raised his eyes, and pointing upwards said in a voice full of tears: " In Heaven!"

Now that he was with God, the last ties which kept his consoling Angel in the world were broken. Angels do not remain on this earth; when they have accomplished their mission, they return instantly to Heaven. That is why they have wings. Céline tried therefore to fly to the Carmel; but the obstacles seemed insurmountable. One day, when matters were going from bad to worse, I said to Our Lord after Holy Communion: "Thou knowest, dear Jesus, how earnestly I have desired that the trials my Father endured should serve as his purgatory. I long to know if my wish is granted. I do not ask Thee to speak to me, I only want a sign. Thou knowest how much opposed is Sister N. to Céline's entering; if she withdraw her opposition, I shall regard it as an answer from Thee, and in this way I shall know that my Father went straight to Heaven."

God, Who holds in His Hand the hearts of His creatures, and inclines them as He will, deigned in His infinite mercy and ineffable condescension to change that Sister's mind. She was the first person I met after my thanksgiving, and, with tears in her eyes, she spoke of Céline's entrance, which she now ardently desired. Shortly afterwards the Bishop set every obstacle aside, and then you were able, dear Mother, without any hesitation, to open our doors to the poor little exile.[30]

Now I have no desire left, unless it be to love Jesus even unto folly! It is Love alone that draws me. I no longer wish either for suffering or death, yet both are precious to me. Long did I call upon them as the messengers of joy. I have suffered much, and I have thought my barque near indeed to the Everlasting Shore. From earliest childhood I have imagined that the Little Flower would be gathered in its springtime; now, the spirit of self-abandonment alone is my guide. I have no other compass, and know not how to ask anything with eagerness, save the perfect accomplishment of God's designs upon my soul. I can say these words of the Canticle of our Father, St. John of the Cross:

> "I drank deep in the cellar of my Friend,
> And, coming forth again,
> Knew naught of all this plain,
> And lost the flock I erst was wont to tend.
> My soul and all its wealth I gave to be His Own;
> No more I tend my flock, all other work is done,
> And all my exercise is Love alone."[31]

Or rather:

> "Love hath so wrought in me

[30] Céline entered the Convent on September 24, 1894, and took the name of Sister Genevieve of St. Teresa.
[31] St. John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle, stanzas 18 and 20.

Since I have known its sway,
That all within me, whether good or ill,
It makes subservient to the end it seeks,
And soon transforms my soul into itself."[32]

Full sweet is the way of Love. It is true one may fall and be unfaithful to grace; but Love, knowing how to profit by everything, quickly consumes whatever is displeasing to Jesus, leaving in the heart only a deep and humble peace. I have obtained many spiritual lights through the works of St. John of the Cross. When I was seventeen and eighteen they were my only food; but, later on, and even now, all spiritual authors leave me cold and dry. However beautiful and touching a book may be, my heart does not respond, and I read without understanding, or, if I understand, I cannot meditate. In my helplessness the Holy Scriptures and the Imitation are of the greatest assistance; in them I find a hidden manna, genuine and pure. But it is from the Gospels that I find most help in the time of prayer; from them I draw all that I need for my poor soul. I am always discovering in them new lights and hidden mysterious meanings. I know and I have experienced that "the Kingdom of God is within us." (cf. Luke 17:21). Our Lord has no need of books or teachers to instruct our souls. He, the Teacher of Teachers, instructs us without any noise of words. I have never heard Him speak, yet I know He is within me. He is there, always guiding and inspiring me; and just when I need them, lights, hitherto unseen, break in. This is not as a rule during my prayers, but in the midst of my daily duties. Sometimes, however, as this evening, at the close of a meditation spent in utter dryness, a word of comfort is given to me: "Here is the Master I give thee, He will teach thee all that thou should do. I wish thee to read in the Book of Life in which is contained the science of love. . . ."[33]

The Science of Love! How sweetly do these words echo in my soul! That science alone do I desire. Having given all my substance for it, like the Spouse in the Canticles, "I think that I have given nothing." (Song of Solomon 8:7). After so many graces, may I not sing with the Psalmist that "the Lord is good, that His Mercy endures for ever" ? (cf. Psalms 106:1).

It seems to me that if everyone were to receive such favors God would be feared by none, but loved to excess; that no one would ever commit the least willful fault—and this through love, not fear.

Yet all souls cannot be alike. It is necessary that they should differ from one another in order that each Divine Perfection may receive its special honor. To me, He has given His Infinite Mercy, and it is in this ineffable mirror that I contemplate His other attributes. Therein all appear to me radiant with Love. His Justice, even more perhaps than the rest, seems to me to be clothed with Love. What joy to think that Our Lord is just, that is to say, that He takes our weakness into account, that He knows perfectly the frailty of our nature ! Of what, then, need I be afraid?

Will not the God of Infinite Justice, Who deigns so lovingly to pardon the sins of the Prodigal Son, be also just to me "who is always with Him" ? (cf. Luke 15:31).

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[32] St. John of the Cross, Hymn to the Deity.

[33] Revelation of Our Lord to Saint Margaret Mary.

In the year 1895, I received the grace to understand, more than ever, how much Jesus desires to be loved. Thinking one day of those who offer themselves as victims to the Justice of God, in order to turn aside the punishment reserved for sinners by taking it upon themselves, I felt this offering to be noble and generous, but was very far from feeling myself drawn to make it. "O my Divine Master," I cried from the bottom of my heart, "shall Thy Justice alone receive victims of holocaust? Has not Thy Merciful Love also need thereof? On all sides it is ignored, rejected . . . the hearts on which Thou would lavish it turn to creatures, there to seek their happiness in the miserable satisfaction of a moment, instead of casting themselves into Thine Arms, into the unfathomable furnace of Thine Infinite Love."

"O my God! must Thy Love which is disdained lie hidden in Thy Heart? I think, if Thou should find souls offering themselves as victims of holocaust to Thy Love, Thou would consume them rapidly; Thou would be well pleased to suffer the flames of infinite tenderness to escape that are imprisoned in Thy Heart."

"If Thy Justice—which is of earth—must needs be satisfied, how much more must Thy Merciful Love desire to inflame souls, since 'Thy Mercy reaches even to the Heavens' ?" (Psalms 36:5). O Jesus! let me be that happy victim—consume Thy holocaust with the Fire of Divine Love!"

Dear Mother, you know the love, or rather the oceans of grace which flooded my soul immediately after I made that Act of Oblation on June 9, 1895. From that day I have been penetrated and surrounded with love. Every moment this Merciful Love renews me and purifies me, leaving in my soul no trace of sin. I cannot fear Purgatory; I know I do not merit to enter even into that place of expiation with the Holy Souls, but I also know that the fire of Love is more sanctifying than the fire of Purgatory. I know that Jesus could not wish useless suffering for us, and He would not inspire me with the desires I feel, were He not willing to fulfill them.

Chapter 9

The Night of the Soul

Dear Mother, I thought I had written enough, and now you wish for more details of my religious life. I will not argue, but I cannot help smiling when I have to tell you things that you know quite as well as I do. Nevertheless, I will obey. I do not ask what use this manuscript can be to any one, I assure you that even were you to burn it before my eyes, without having read it, I should not mind in the least.

The opinion is not uncommon in the Community that you have always indulged me, ever since I entered the Convent; however, "Man sees those things that appear, but the Lord beholds the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7). Dear Mother, once again I thank you for not having spared me. Jesus knew well that His Little Flower needed the life-giving water of humiliation—it was too weak to take root otherwise, and to you it owes so great a blessing. But for some months, the Divine Master has entirely changed His method of cultivating His Little Flower. Finding no doubt that it has been sufficiently watered; He now allows it to expand under the warm rays of a brilliant sun. He smiles on it, and this favor also comes through you, dear Mother, but far from doing it harm, those smiles make the Little Flower grow in a wondrous way. Deep down in its heart it treasures those precious drops of dew—the mortifications of other days—and they remind it that it is small and frail. Even were all creatures to draw near to admire and flatter it, that would not add a shade of idle satisfaction to the true joy which thrills it, on realizing that in God's Eyes it is but a poor, worthless thing, and nothing more.

When I say that I am indifferent to praise, I am not speaking, dear Mother, of the love and confidence you show me; on the contrary I am deeply touched thereby, but I feel that I have now nothing to fear, and I can listen to those praises unperturbed, attributing to God all that is good in me. If it pleases Him to make me appear better than I am, it is nothing to me, He can act as He will. My God, by how many ways do Thou lead souls! We read of Saints who left absolutely nothing at their death, not the least thing by which to remember them, not even a single line of writing; and there are others like our holy Mother, St. Teresa, who have enriched the Church with their sublime teaching, and have not hesitated to reveal "the secrets of the King," (cf. Tobit 12:7) that He may be better known and better loved. Which of these two ways is more pleasing to Our Lord? It seems to me they are equally so.

All those beloved by God have followed the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, who commanded the prophets to write: "Tell the just man that all is well." (Isaiah 3:10) Yes, all is well when one seeks only the Master's Will, and so I, poor Little Flower, obey my Jesus when I try to please you, who represent him here on earth.

You know it has ever been my desire to become a Saint, but I have always felt, in comparing myself with the Saints, that I am as far removed from them as the grain of sand, which the passer-by tramples underfoot, is remote from the mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds.

Instead of being discouraged, I concluded that God would not inspire desires which could not be realized, and that I may aspire to sanctity in spite of my littleness. For me to become great is impossible, I must bear with myself and my many imperfections; but I will seek out a means of getting to Heaven by a little way—very short and very straight, a little way that is wholly new. We live in an age of inventions; nowadays the rich need not trouble to climb the stairs, they have lifts instead. Well, I mean to try and find a lift by which I may be raised unto God, for I am too tiny to climb the steep stairway of perfection. I have sought to find in Holy Scripture some suggestion as to what this lift might be, which I so much desired, and I read these words uttered by the Eternal Wisdom Itself: "Whosoever is a little one, let him come to Me." (Proverbs 9:4). Then I drew near to God, feeling sure that I had discovered what I sought; but wishing to know further what He would do to the little one, I continued my search and this is what I found: "You shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees; as one whom the mother caresses, so will I comfort you." (cf. Isaiah 66:12-13).

Never have I been consoled by words more tender and sweet. Thine Arms, then, O Jesus, are the lift which must raise me up even unto Heaven. To get there I need not grow; on the contrary, I must remain little, I must become still less. O my God, Thou hast gone beyond my expectation, and I . . . "I will sing Thy mercies! Thou hast taught me, O Lord, from my youth and till now I have declared Thy wonderful works, and thus unto old age and gray hairs." (cf. Psalms 71:16-18).

What will this old age be for me? It seems to me that it could as well be now as later: two thousand years are no more in the Eyes of the Lord than twenty years . . . than a single day! But do not think, dear Mother, that your child is anxious to leave you, and deems it a greater grace to die in the morning rather than in the evening of life; to please Jesus is what she really values and desires above all things. Now that He seems to come near and draw her to His Heavenly Home, she is glad; she has understood that God has need of no one to do good upon earth, still less of her than of others. Meantime I know your will, dear Mother. You wish me to carry out, at your side, a work which is both sweet and easy,[34] and this work I shall complete in Heaven. You have said to me, as Our Lord said to St. Peter: "Feed my lambs." I am amazed, for I feel that I am so little. I have entreated you to feed your little lambs yourself and to keep me among them. You have complied in part with my reasonable wish, and have called me their companion, rather than their mistress, telling me nevertheless to lead them through fertile and shady pastures, to point out where the grass is sweetest and best, and warn them against the brilliant but poisonous flowers, which they must never touch except to crush under foot.

How is it, dear Mother, that my youth and inexperience have not frightened you? Are you not afraid that I shall let your lambs stray afar? In acting as you have done, perhaps you remembered that Our Lord is often pleased to give wisdom to little ones.

On this earth it is rare indeed to find souls who do not measure God's Omnipotence by their own narrow thoughts. The world is always ready to admit exceptions everywhere here below. God alone is denied this liberty. It has long been the custom among men to reckon experience by age, for in his youth the holy King David sang to His Lord: "I am young and despised," but in the same Psalm he does not fear to say: "I have had understanding above

[34] Saint Thérèse had charge of the novices without being given the title of Novice Mistress.

old men, because I have sought Thy commandments, Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths; I have sworn, and I am determined, to keep the judgments of Thy Justice." (cf. Psalms 119:100, 104-106, 141).

And you did not even consider it imprudent to assure me one day, that the Divine Master had enlightened my soul and given me the experience of years. I am too little now to be guilty of vanity; I am likewise too little to endeavor to prove my humility by fine-sounding words. I prefer to own in all simplicity that "He that is mighty has done great things for me" (Lk 1:49)—and the greatest is that He has shown me my littleness and how incapable I am of anything good.

My soul has known trials of many kinds. I have suffered much on this earth. In my childhood I suffered with sadness, but now I find sweetness in all things. Anyone but you, dear Mother, who know me thoroughly, would smile at reading these pages, for has ever a soul seemed less tried than mine? But if the martyrdom that I have endured for the past year were made known, how astonished everyone would be! Since it is your wish, I will try to describe it, but there are no words really to explain these things. The words will always fall short of the reality.

During Lent last year, I felt much better than ever and continued so until Holy Week, in spite of the fast that I observed in all its rigor. But in the early hours of Good Friday, Jesus gave me to hope that I should soon join Him in His beautiful Home. How sweet is this memory!

I could not obtain permission to remain watching at the Altar of Repose throughout the Thursday night, and I returned to our cell at midnight. Scarcely was my head laid on the pillow when I felt a hot stream rise to my lips. I thought I was going to die, and my heart nearly broke with joy. But as I had already put out our lamp, I mortified my curiosity until the morning and slept in peace. At five o'clock, when it was time to get up, I remembered at once that I had some good news to learn, and going to the window I found, as I had expected, that our handkerchief was soaked with blood. Dearest Mother, what hope was mine! I was firmly convinced that on this anniversary of His Death, my Beloved had allowed me to hear His first call, like a sweet distant murmur, heralding His joyful approach.

I assisted at Prime and Chapter most fervently, and then I hastened to cast myself at my Mother's knees and confide to her my happiness. I did not feel the least pain, so I easily obtained permission to finish Lent as I had begun, and on this Good Friday I shared in all the austerities of the Carmel without any relaxation. Never had these austerities seemed sweeter to me; the hope of soon entering Heaven transported me with joy.

Still full of joy, I returned to our cell on the evening of that happy day, and was quietly falling asleep, when my sweet Jesus gave me the same sign as on the previous night, of my speedy entrance to Eternal Life. I felt such a clear and lively Faith that the thought of Heaven was my sole delight. I could not believe it possible for men to be utterly devoid of Faith, and I was convinced that those who deny the existence of another world really lie in their hearts.

But during the Paschal days, so full of light, our Lord made me understand that there really are in truth souls bereft of Faith and Hope, who, through abuse of grace, lose these precious treasures, the only source of pure and lasting joy. He allowed my soul to be overwhelmed with darkness, and the thought of Heaven, which had consoled me from my

earliest childhood, now became a subject of conflict and torture. This trial did not last merely for days or weeks—I have been suffering for months, and I still await deliverance. I wish I could express what I feel, but it is beyond me. One must have passed through this dark tunnel to understand its blackness. However, I will try to explain it by means of a comparison.

Let me suppose that I had been born in a land of thick fogs, and had never seen the beauties of nature, or a single ray of sunshine, although I had heard of these wonders from my early youth, and knew that the country wherein I dwelt was not my real home—there was another land, unto which I should always look forward. Now this is not a fable, invented by an inhabitant of the land of fogs; it is the solemn truth, for the King of that sunlit country dwelt for three and thirty years in the land of darkness, and alas!—the darkness did not understand that He was the Light of the World (cf. Jn 1:5, 9-10).

But, dear Lord, Thy child has understood Thou art the Light Divine; she asks Thy pardon for her unbelieving brethren, and is willing to eat the bread of sorrow as long as Thou may wish. For love of Thee she will sit at that table of bitterness where these poor sinners take their food, and she will not stir from it until Thou will give the sign. But may she not say in her own name, and the name of her guilty brethren: "O God, be merciful to us sinners!" (cf. Lk 18:13). Send us away justified. May all those on whom Faith does not shine see the light at last! O my God, if that table which they profane can be purified by one that loves Thee, I am willing to remain there alone to eat the bread of tears, until it shall please Thee to bring me to Thy Kingdom of Light: the only favor I ask is, that I may never give Thee cause for offence.

From the time of my childhood I felt that one day I should be set free from this land of darkness. I believed it, not only because I had been told so by others, but my heart's most secret and deepest longings assured me that there was in store for me another and more beautiful country—an abiding dwelling place. I was like Christopher Columbus, whose genius anticipated the discovery of the New World. And suddenly the mists about me have penetrated my very soul and have enveloped me so completely that I cannot even picture to myself this promised country … all has faded away. When my heart, weary of the surrounding darkness, tries to find some rest in the thought of a life to come, my anguish increases. It seems to me that out of the darkness I hear the mocking voice of the unbeliever: "You dream of a land of light and fragrance, you dream that the Creator of these wonders will be yours forever, you think one day to escape from these mists where you now languish. Nay, rejoice in death, which will give you, not what you hope for, but a night darker still, the night of utter nothingness!"

Dear Mother, this description of what I suffer is as far removed from reality as the first rough outline is from the model, but I fear that to write more would be to blaspheme . . . even now I may have said too much. May God forgive me! He knows that I try to live by Faith, though it does not afford me the least consolation. I have made more acts of Faith in this last year than during all the rest of my life.

Each time that my enemy would provoke me to combat, I behave as a gallant soldier. I know that a duel is an act of cowardice, and so, without once looking him in the face, I turn my back on the foe, then I hasten to my Savior, and vow that I am ready to shed my blood in witness of my belief in Heaven. I tell Him, if only He will deign to open it to poor unbelievers, I am content to sacrifice all pleasure in the thought of it as long as I live. And

in spite of this trial, which robs me of all comfort, I still can say: "You have given me, O Lord, delight in all you do." (cf. Psalms 92:4). For what joy can be greater than to suffer for Thy Love? The more the suffering is, and the less it appears before men, the more is it to Thy Honor and Glory. Even if—but I know it to be impossible—Thou should not deign to heed my sufferings, I should still be happy to bear them, in the hope that by my tears I might perhaps prevent or atone for one sin against Faith.

No doubt, dear Mother, you will think I exaggerate somewhat the night of my soul. If you judge by the poems I have composed this year, it must seem as though I have been flooded with consolations, like a child for whom the veil of Faith is almost rent asunder. And yet it is not a veil—it is a wall that rises to the very heavens and shuts out the starry sky.

When I sing of the happiness of Heaven and the eternal possession of God, I do not feel any joy therein, for I sing only of what I wish to believe. Sometimes, I confess, a little ray of sunshine illumines my dark night, and I enjoy peace for an instant, but later, the remembrance of this ray of light, instead of consoling me, makes the blackness thicker still.

And yet never have I felt so deeply how sweet and merciful is the Lord. He did not send me this heavy cross when it might have discouraged me, but at a time when I was able to bear it. Now it simply takes from me all natural satisfaction I might feel in my longing for Heaven.

Dear Mother, it seems to me that at present there is nothing to impede my upward flight, for I have no longer any desire save to love Him till I die. I am free; I fear nothing now, not even what I dreaded more than anything else, a long illness that would make me a burden to the Community. Should it please the Good God, I am quite content to have my bodily and mental sufferings prolonged for years. I do not fear a long life; I do not shrink from the struggle. The Lord is the Rock upon which I stand—"Who teaches my hands to fight, and my fingers to war. He is my Protector and I have hoped in Him." (cf. Psalms 144:1-2). I have never asked God to let me die young. It is true I have always thought I should do so, but it is a favor I have not tried to obtain.

Our Lord is often content with the wish to do something for His Glory, and you know the immensity of my desires. You know also that Jesus has offered me more than one bitter chalice through my dearly loved sisters. The holy King David was right when he sang: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Psalms 133:1). But such unity can only exist upon earth in the midst of sacrifice. It was not in order to be with my sisters that I came to this holy Carmel; on the contrary, I knew well that in curbing my natural affection I should have much to suffer.

How can it be said that it is more perfect to separate oneself from home and friends? Has anyone ever reproached brothers who fight side by side, or together win the martyr's palm? It is true, no doubt, they encourage each other; but it is also true that the martyrdom of each is martyrdom to them all.

And so it is in the religious life; theologians call it martyrdom. A heart given to God loses nothing of its natural affection—on the contrary, this affection grows stronger by becoming purer and more spiritual. It is with this love, dear Mother, that I love you and my sisters. I am glad to fight beside you for the glory of the King of Heaven, but I am ready to go to another battlefield, should the Divine Commander but express a wish. An order would not be necessary: a simple look, a sign, would suffice.

Ever since I came to the Carmel I have thought that if Our Lord did not take me quickly to Heaven, my lot would be that of Noah's dove, and that one day he would open the

window of the Ark and bid me fly to heathen lands, bearing the olive branch. This thought has helped me to soar above all created things.

Knowing that even in the Carmel there must be partings, I tried to make my abode in Heaven; and I accepted not only exile in the midst of an unknown people, but what was far more bitter, I accepted exile for my sisters. And indeed, two of them were asked for by the Carmel of Saigon, our own foundation. For a time there was serious question of their being sent, and I would not say a word to hold them back, though my heart ached at the thought of the trials awaiting them. Now all that is at an end; the superiors were absolutely opposed to their departure, and I only touched the cup with my lips long enough to taste of its bitterness.

Let me tell you, dear Mother, why, if Our Lady cures me, I wish to respond to the call from our Mothers of Hanoi. It appears that to live in foreign Carmels, a very special vocation is needed, and many souls think they are called without being so in reality. You have told me that I have this vocation, and that my health alone stands in the way. But if I am destined one day to leave this Carmel, it will not be without a pang. My heart is naturally sensitive, and because this is a cause of much suffering, I wish to offer Jesus whatsoever it can bear. Here, I am loved by you and all the Sisters, and this love is very sweet to me, and I dream of a convent where I should be unknown, where I should taste the bitterness of exile. I know only too well how useless I am, and so it is not for the sake of the services I might render to the Carmel of Hanoi that I would leave all that is dearest to me—my sole reason would be to do God's Will, and sacrifice myself for Him.

And I should not suffer any disappointment, for when we expect nothing but suffering, then the least joy is a surprise; and later on suffering itself becomes the greatest of all joys, when we seek it as a precious treasure.

But I know I shall never recover from this sickness, and yet I am at peace. For years I have not belonged to myself, I have surrendered myself wholly to Jesus, and He is free to do with me whatsoever He pleases. He has spoken to me of exile, and has asked me if I would consent to drink of that chalice. At once I essayed to grasp it, but He, withdrawing His Hand, showed me that my consent was all He desired.

O my God! from how much disquiet do we free ourselves by the vow of obedience! Happy is the simple religious. Her one guide being the will of her superiors, she is ever sure of following the right path, and has no fear of being mistaken, even when it seems that her superiors are making a mistake. But if she ceases to consult the unerring compass, then at once her soul goes astray in barren wastes, where the waters of grace quickly fail. Dear Mother, you are the compass Jesus has given me to direct me safely to the Eternal Shore. I find it most sweet to fix my eyes upon you, and then do the Will of my Lord. By allowing me to suffer these temptations against Faith, He has greatly increased the spirit of Faith, which makes me see Him living in your soul, and through you communicating His holy commands.

I am well aware that you lighten the burden of obedience for me, but deep in my heart I feel that my attitude would not change, nor would my filial affection grow less, were you to treat me with severity: and this because I should still see the Will of God manifesting itself in another way for the greater good of my soul.

Among the numberless graces that I have received this year, not the least is an understanding of how far-reaching is the precept of charity. I had never before fathomed these words of Our Lord: "The second commandment is like to the first: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Mt 22:39). I had set myself above all to love God, and it was in

loving Him that I discovered the hidden meaning of these other words: "It is not those who say, Lord, Lord! who enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the Will of My Father." (Mt 7:21).

Jesus revealed to me this Will when at the Last Supper He gave His New Commandment in telling His Apostles to love one another as He had loved them. I set myself to find out how He had loved His Apostles; and I saw that it was not for their natural qualities, for they were ignorant men, full of earthly ideas. And yet He calls them His Friends, His Brethren; He desires to see them near Him in the Kingdom of His Father, and in order to admit them to this Kingdom. He wills to die on the Cross, saying: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (Cf. Jn 13:34).

As I meditated on these Divine words, I saw how imperfect was the love I bore my Sisters in religion. I understood that I did not love them as Our Lord loves them. I know now that true charity consists in bearing all our neighbors' defects—not being surprised at their weakness, but edified at their smallest virtues. Above all I know that charity must not remain shut up in the heart, for "No man lights a candle, and puts it in a hidden place, nor under a bushel; but upon a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light." (Lk 11:33).

It seems to me, dear Mother, this candle represents that charity which enlightens and gladdens, not only those who are dear to us, but all those who are of the household.

In the Old Law, when God told His people to love their neighbor as themselves, He had not yet come down upon earth; and knowing full well how man loves himself, He could not ask anything greater. But when Our Lord gave His Apostles a New Commandment—"His own commandment" (Cf. Jn 15:12)—He was not content with saying: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," but would have them love even as He had loved, and as He will love till the end of time.

O my Jesus! Thou dost never ask what is impossible; Thou knowest better than I, how frail and imperfect I am, and Thou knowest that I shall never love my Sisters as Thou hast loved them, unless within me Thou lovest them, dear Lord! It is because Thou dost desire to grant me this grace that Thou hast given a New Commandment. Oh how I love it, since I am assured thereby that it is Thy Will to love in me all those Thou dost bid me love!

Yes, I know when I show charity to others, it is simply Jesus acting in me, and the more closely I am united to Him, the more dearly I love my Sisters. If I wish to increase this love in my heart, and the devil tries to bring before me the defects of a Sister, I hasten to look for her virtues, her good motives; I call to mind that though I may have seen her fall once, no doubt she has gained many victories over herself, which in her humility she conceals. It is even possible that what seems to me a fault, may very likely, on account of her good intention, be an act of virtue. I have no difficulty in persuading myself of this, because I have had the same experience. One day, during recreation, the portress came to ask for a Sister to help her. I had a childish longing to do this work, and it happened the choice fell upon me. I therefore began to fold up our needlework, but so slowly that my neighbor, who I knew would like to take my place, was ready before me. The Sister who had asked for help, seeing how deliberate I was, said laughingly: "I thought you would not add this pearl to your crown, you are so extremely slow," and all the Community thought I had yielded to natural reluctance. I cannot tell you what profit I derived from this incident, and it made me indulgent towards others. It still checks any feelings of vanity, when I am praised, for I

reflect that since my small acts of virtue can be mistaken for imperfections, why should not my imperfections be mistaken for virtue? And I say with St. Paul: "To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by man's day. But neither do I judge myself. He that judges me is the Lord." (Cf. 1 Cor 4:3-4).

And it is the Lord, it is Jesus, Who is my judge. Therefore I will try always to think leniently of others, that He may judge me leniently, or rather not at all, since He says: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." (Lk 6:37).

But returning to the Holy Gospel where Our Lord explains to me clearly in what His New Commandment consists, I read in St. Matthew: "You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you." (Mt 5:43-44).

There are, of course, no enemies in the Carmel; but, after all, we have our natural likes and dislikes. We may feel drawn towards one Sister, and may be tempted to go a long way round to avoid meeting another. Well, Our Lord tells me that this is the Sister to love and pray for, even though her behavior may make me imagine she does not care for me. "If you love them that love you, what thanks are to you? For sinners also love those that love them."' And it is not enough to love, we must prove our love; naturally one likes to please a friend, but that is not charity, for sinners do the same.

Our Lord also taught me: "Give to everyone that asketh thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again." To give to everyone who asks is not so pleasant as to give of one's own accord. If we are asked pleasantly, it is easy to give; but if we are asked discourteously, then, unless we are perfect in charity, there is an inward rebellion, and we find no end of excuses for refusing. Perhaps, after first pointing out the rudeness of the request, we make such a favor of consenting thereto, that the slight service takes far less time to perform than was lost in arguing the point. And if it is difficult to give to whosoever asks, it is far more difficult to let what belongs to us be taken without asking it again. Dear Mother, I say this is hard, but I should rather say that it seems hard, for "The yoke of the Lord is sweet and His burden light." (Mt 11:30). And when we submit to that yoke, we at once feel its sweetness.

I have said Jesus does not wish me to ask again for what is my own. This ought to seem quite easy, for, in reality, nothing is mine. I ought, then, to be glad when an occasion arises which brings home to me the poverty to which I am vowed. I used to think myself completely detached, but since Our Lord's words have become clear, I see that I am indeed very imperfect.

For instance: when starting to paint, if I find the brushes in disorder, and a ruler or penknife gone, I feel inclined to lose patience, and have to keep a firm hold over myself not to betray my feelings. Of course, I may ask for these needful things, and if I do so humbly I am not disobeying Our Lord's command. I am then like the poor who hold out their hands for the necessaries of life, and, if refused, are not surprised, since no one owes them anything. Deep peace inundates the soul when it soars above mere natural sentiments. There is no joy equal to that which is shared by the truly poor in spirit. If they ask with detachment for something necessary, and not only is it refused, but an attempt is made to take away what they already possess, they are following the Master's advice: "If any man will take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." (Mt 5:40). To give up one's cloak is, it seems to me, to renounce every right, and to regard oneself as the servant, the slave, of all.

Without a cloak it is easier to walk or run, and so the Master adds: "And whosoever shall force thee to go one mile, go with him other two." (Mt 5:41).

It is therefore not enough for me to give to whoever asks—I ought to anticipate the wish, and show myself glad to be of service; but if anything of mine be taken away, I should show myself glad to be rid of it. I cannot always carry out to the letter the words of the Gospel, for there are occasions when I am compelled to refuse some request. Yet when charity is deeply rooted in the soul it lets itself be outwardly seen, and there is a way of refusing so graciously what one is unable to give, that the refusal affords as much pleasure as the gift would have done. It is true that people do not hesitate to ask from those who readily oblige, nevertheless I ought not to avoid importunate Sisters on the pretext that I shall be forced to refuse. The Divine Master has said: "From him that would borrow of thee turn not away." (Mt 5:42). Nor should I be kind in order to appear so, or in the hope that the Sister will return the service, for once more it is written: "If you lend to them of whom you hope to receive, what thanks are to you? For sinners also lend to sinners for to receive as much. But you do good and lend, hoping for nothing thereby, and your reward shall be great." (Lk 6:34-35).

Verily, the reward is great even on earth. In this path, it is only the first step which costs. To lend without hope of being repaid seems hard; one would rather give outright, for what you give is no longer yours. When a Sister says confidently: "I want your help for some hours—I have our Mother's leave, and be assured I will do as much for you later," one may know well that these hours lent will not be repaid, and be sorely tempted to say: "I prefer to give them." But that would gratify self-love, besides letting the Sister feel that you do not rely much on her promise. The Divine precepts run contrary to our natural inclinations, and without the help of grace it would be impossible to understand them, far less to put them in practice.

Dear Mother, I feel that I have expressed myself with more than usual confusion, and I do not know what you can find to interest you in these rambling pages, but I am not aiming at a literary masterpiece, and if I weary you by this discourse on charity, it will at least prove your child's good will. I must confess I am far from living up to my ideal, and yet the very desire to do so gives me a feeling of peace. If I fall into some fault, I arise again at once—and for some months now I have not even had to struggle. I have been able to say with our holy Father, St. John of the Cross: "My house is entirely at peace," and I attribute this interior peace to a victory I gained over myself. Since that victory, the hosts of Heaven have hastened to my aid, for they will not allow me to be wounded, now that I have fought so valiantly.

A holy nun of our Community annoyed me in all that she did; the devil must have had something to do with it, and he it was undoubtedly who made me see in her so many disagreeable points. I did not want to yield to my natural antipathy, for I remembered that charity ought to betray itself in deeds, and not exist merely in the feelings, so I set myself to do for this Sister all I should do for the one I loved most. Every time I met her I prayed for her, and offered to God her virtues and merits. I felt that this was very pleasing to Our Lord, for there is no artist who is not gratified when his works are praised, and the Divine Artist of souls is pleased when we do not stop at the exterior, but, penetrating to the inner sanctuary He has chosen, admire its beauty.

I did not rest satisfied with praying for this Sister, who gave me such occasions for self-mastery, I tried to render her as many services as I could, and when tempted to answer her sharply, I made haste to smile and change the subject, for the Imitation says : "It is more profitable to leave everyone to his way of thinking than to give way to contentious discourses." And sometimes when the temptation was very severe, I would run like a deserter from the battlefield, if I could do so without letting the Sister guess my inward struggle.

One day she said to me with a beaming face: "My dear Sister Thérèse, tell me what attraction you find in me, for whenever we meet, you greet me with such a sweet smile." Ah! what attracted me was Jesus hidden in the depths of her soul—Jesus who makes sweet even that which is most bitter.

I spoke just now, dear Mother, of the flight that is my last resource to escape defeat. It is not honorable, I confess, but during my novitiate, whenever I had recourse to this means, it invariably succeeded. I will give you a striking example, which will, I am sure, amuse you. You had been ill with bronchitis for several days, and we were all uneasy about you. One morning, in my duty as sacristan, I came to put back the keys of the Communion-grating. This was my work, and I was very pleased to have an opportunity of seeing you, though I took good care not to show it. One of the Sisters, full of solicitude, feared I should awake you, and tried to take the keys from me. I told her as politely as I could, that I was quite as anxious as she was there should be no noise, and added that it was my right to return them. I see now that it would have been more perfect simply to yield, but I did not see it then, and so I followed her into the room. Very soon what she feared came to pass: the noise did awaken you. All the blame fell upon me; the Sister I had argued with began a long discourse, of which the point was : Sister Thérèse made all the noise. I was burning to defend myself, but a happy inspiration of grace came to me. I thought that if I began to justify myself I should certainly lose my peace of mind, and as I had too little virtue to let myself be unjustly accused without answering, my last chance of safety lay in flight. No sooner thought than done. I hurried away, but my heart beat so violently, I could not go far, and I was obliged to sit down on the stairs to enjoy in quiet the fruit of my victory. This is an odd kind of courage, undoubtedly, but I think it is best not to expose oneself in the face of certain defeat.

When I recall these days of my novitiate I understand how far I was from perfection, and the memory of certain things makes me laugh. How good God has been, to have trained my soul and given it wings! All the snares of the hunter can no longer frighten me, for "A net is spread in vain before the eyes of them that have wings." (Prov 1:17).

It may be that some day my present state will appear to me full of defects, but nothing now surprises me, and I do not even distress myself because I am so weak. On the contrary I glory therein, and expect each day to find fresh imperfections. Nay, I must confess, these lights on my own nothingness are of more good to my soul than lights on matters of Faith. Remembering that "Charity covers a multitude of sins," (Prov 10:12) I draw from this rich mine, which Our Savior has opened to us in the Gospels. I search the depths of His adorable words, and cry out with David: "I have run in the way of Thy commandments since Thou hast enlarged my heart." (Ps 119:32). And charity alone can make wide the heart. O Jesus! since its sweet flame consumes my heart, I run with delight in the way of Thy New Commandment, and I desire to run therein until that blessed day when, with Thy

company of Virgins, I shall follow Thee through Thy boundless Realm, singing Thy New Canticle— The Canticle of Love.

Chapter 10

The New Commandment

Dear Mother, God in His infinite goodness has given me a clear insight into the deep mysteries of Charity. If I could but express what I know, you would hear a heavenly music; but alas! I can only stammer like a child, and if God's own words were not my support, I should be tempted to beg leave to hold my peace. When the Divine Master tells me to give to whosoever asks of me, and to let what is mine be taken without asking it again, it seems to me that He speaks not only of the goods of earth, but also of the goods of Heaven. Besides, neither one nor the other are really mine; I renounced the former by the vow of poverty, and the latter gifts are simply lent. If God withdraw them, I have no right to complain.

But our very own ideas, the fruit of our mind and heart, form a treasury on which none dare lay hands. For instance, if I reveal to a Sister some light given me in prayer, and she repeats it later on as though it were her own, it seems as though she appropriates what is mine. Or, if during recreation someone makes an apt and witty remark, which her neighbor repeats to the Community, without acknowledging whence it came, it is a sort of theft; and the person who originated the remark is naturally inclined to seize the first opportunity of delicately insinuating that her thoughts have been borrowed.

I could not so well explain all these weaknesses of human nature had I not experienced them. I should have preferred to indulge in the illusion that I was the only one who suffered thus, had you not bidden me advise the novices in their difficulties. I have learnt much in the discharge of this duty, and especially I feel bound to put in practice what I teach.

I can say with truth that by God's grace I am no more attached to the gifts of the intellect than to material things. If it happens that a thought of mine should please my Sisters, I find it quite easy to let them regard it as their own. My thoughts belong to the Holy Ghost. They are not mine. St. Paul assures us that without the Spirit of Love, we cannot call God our Father (cf. Rom 8:15).

And besides, though far from depreciating those beautiful thoughts which bring us nearer to God, I have long been of opinion that we must be careful not to over-estimate their worth. The highest inspirations are of no value without good works. It is true that others may derive much profit therefrom, if they are duly grateful to our Lord for allowing them to share in the abundance of one of His privileged souls; but should this privileged soul take pride in spiritual wealth, and imitate the Pharisee, she becomes like to a hostess dying of starvation at a well-spread table, while her guests enjoy the richest fare, and perhaps cast envious glances at the possessor of so many treasures.

Verily it is true that God alone can sound the heart. How short-sighted are His creatures! When they see a soul whose lights surpass their own, they conclude that the Divine Master loves them less. Since when has He lost the right to make use of one of His children, in order to supply the others with the nourishment they need? That right was not lost in the days of Pharaoh, for God said unto him: "And therefore have I raised thee, that I may

show My power in thee, and My Name may be spoken of throughout all the earth." (Ex 9:16).

Generations have passed away since the Most High spoke these words, and His ways have not changed. He has ever chosen human instruments for the accomplishment of His work.

If an artist's canvas could but think and speak, surely it would never complain of being touched and re-touched by the brush, nor would it feel envious thereof, knowing that all its beauty is due to the artist alone. So, too, the brush itself could not boast of the masterpiece it had helped to produce, for it must know that an artist is never at a loss; that difficulties do but stimulate him; and that at times it pleases him to make use of instruments the most unlikely and defective.

Dear Mother, I am the little brush that Jesus has chosen to paint His likeness in the souls you have confided to my care. Now an artist has several brushes—two at the least: the first, which is more useful, gives the ground tints and rapidly covers the whole canvas; the other, and smaller one, puts in the lesser touches. Mother, you represent the big brush which our Lord holds lovingly in His Hand when He wishes to do some great work in the souls of your children; and I am the little one He deigns to use afterwards, to fill in the minor details.

The first time the Divine Master took up His little brush was about December 8, 1892. I shall always remember that time as one of special grace.

When I entered the Carmel, I found in the novitiate a companion about eight years older than I was. In spite of this difference of age, we became the closest friends, and to encourage an affection which gave promise of fostering virtue we were allowed to converse together on spiritual subjects. My companion charmed me by her innocence and by her open and frank disposition, though I was surprised to find how her love for you differed from mine; and besides, I regretted many things in her behavior. But God had already given me to understand that there are souls for whom in His Mercy He waits unweariedly, and to whom He gives His light by degrees; so I was very careful not to forestall Him.

One day when I was thinking over the permission we had to talk together, so that we might—as our holy constitutions tell us—incite ourselves more ardently to the love of our Divine Spouse, it came home to me sadly that our conversations did not attain the desired end; and I understood that either I must no longer fear to speak out, or else I must put an end to what was degenerating into mere worldly talk. I begged our Lord to inspire me with words, kind and convincing; or better still, to speak Himself for me. He heard my prayer, for those "who look upon Him shall be enlightened (cf. Psalms 34:5)," and "to the upright a light is risen in the darkness (Psalms 112:4)." The first of these texts I apply to myself, the other to my companion, who was truly upright in heart.

The next time we met, the poor little Sister saw at once that my manner had changed, and, blushing deeply, she sat down beside me. I pressed her to my heart, and told her gently what was in my mind; then I pointed out to her in what true love consists, and proved that in loving her Prioress with such natural affection she was in reality loving herself. I confided to her the sacrifices of this kind which I had been obliged to make at the beginning of my religious life, and before long her tears were mingled with mine. She admitted very humbly that she was in the wrong and that I was right, and, begging me as a favor always to point out her faults, she promised to begin a new life. From this time our love for one

another became truly spiritual; in us were fulfilled these words of the Holy Ghost: "A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city." (cf. Proverbs 18:19).

Dear Mother, you know very well that it was not my wish to turn my companion away from you, I only wanted her to grasp that true love feeds on sacrifice, and that in proportion as our souls renounce natural enjoyments our affections become stronger and more detached.

I remember that when I was a postulant I was sometimes so violently tempted to seek my own satisfaction by having a word with you, that I was obliged to hurry past your cell and hold on to the banisters to keep myself from turning back. Numerous permissions I wanted to ask, and a hundred pretexts for yielding to my desires suggested themselves, but now I am truly glad that I did not listen. I already enjoy the reward promised to those who fight bravely. I no longer feel the need of refusing myself these consolations, for my heart is fixed on God. Because it has loved Him only, it has grown, little by little, and now it can give to those who are dear to Him a far deeper and truer love than if it were centred in a barren and selfish affection.

I have told you of the first piece of work which you accomplished together with Our Lord by means of the little brush, but that was only the prelude to the masterpiece which was afterwards to be painted. From the moment I entered the sanctuary of souls, I saw at a glance that the task was beyond my strength. Throwing myself without delay into Our Lord's Arms, I imitated those tiny children, who, when they are frightened, hide their faces on their father's shoulder, and I said:

"Dear Lord, Thou seest that I am too small to feed these little ones, but if through me Thou wilt give to each what is suitable, then fill my hands, and without leaving the shelter of Thine Arms, or even turning away, I will distribute Thy treasures to the soul who come to me asking for food. Should they find it to their taste, I shall know that this is due not to me, but to Thee; and if, on the contrary, they find fault with its bitterness, I shall not be cast down, but try to persuade them that it cometh from Thee, while taking good care to make no change in it."

The knowledge that it was impossible to do anything of myself rendered my task easier. My one interior occupation was to unite myself more and more closely to God, knowing that the rest would be given to me over and above. And indeed my hope has never been deceived; I have always found my hands filled when sustenance was needed for the souls of my Sisters. But had I done otherwise, and relied on my own strength, I should very soon have been forced to abandon my task.

From afar it seems so easy to do good to souls, to teach them to love God more, and to model them according to one's own ideas. But, when we draw nearer, we quickly feel that without God's help this is quite as impossible as to bring back the sun when once it has set. We must forget ourselves, and put aside our tastes and ideas, and guide souls not by our own way, but along the path which Our Lord points out. Even this is not the most difficult part; what costs me more than all is having to observe their faults, their slightest imperfections, and wage war against them.

Unhappily for me—I was going to say, but that would be cowardly, so I will say—happily for my Sisters, ever since I placed myself in the Arms of Jesus I have been like a watchman on the look-out for the enemy from the highest turret of a fortified castle. Nothing escapes my vigilance; indeed, I am sometimes surprised at my own clear-

sightedness, and I think it was quite excusable in the prophet Jonas to fly before the face of the Lord, that he might not have to announce the ruin of Nineveh. Rather than make one single reproach, I would prefer to receive a thousand, yet I feel it is necessary that the task should cause me pain, for if I spoke only through natural impulse, then ~he soul in fault would not understand its defects and would simply think: "This Sister is displeased, and her displeasure falls on me although I am full of the best intentions."

But in this, as in all else, I must practice sacrifice and self-denial. Even in the matter of writing a letter, I feel that it will produce no fruit, unless I am disinclined to write, and only do so from obedience.

When conversing with a novice I am on the watch to mortify myself, and I avoid asking questions which would satisfy my curiosity. If she begins to speak on an interesting subject, and, leaving it unfinished, passes on to another that wearies me, I take care not to remind her of the interruption, for it seems to me that no good can come of self-seeking.

I know, dear Mother, that your little lambs find me severe; if they were to read these lines, they would say that, so far as they can see, it does not distress me to run after them, and show them how they have soiled their beautiful white fleece, or torn it in the brambles. Well, the little lambs may say what they like—in their hearts they know that I love them dearly; there is no fear of my imitating "the hireling who seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and flieth." (Jn 10:12).

I am ready to lay down my life for them, and my affection is so disinterested that I would not have my novices know this. By God's help, I have never tried to draw their hearts to myself, for I have always understood that my mission was to lead them to Him and to you, dear Mother, who on this earth hold His place in their regard, and whom, therefore, they must love and respect.

I said before, that I have learnt much by guiding others. In the first place I see that all souls have more or less the same battles to fight, and on the other hand, that one soul differs widely from another, so each must be dealt with differently. With some I must humble myself, and not shrink from acknowledging my own struggles and defeats; then they confess more readily the faults into which they fall, and are pleased that I know by experience what they suffer. With others, my only means of success is to be firm, and never go back on what I have once said; self-abasement would be taken for weakness.

Our Lord has granted me the grace never to fear the conflict; at all costs I must do my duty. I have more than once been told: "If you want me to obey, you must be gentle and not severe, otherwise you will gain nothing." But no one is a good judge in his own case. During a painful operation a child will be sure to cry out and say that the remedy is worse than the disease; but if after a few days he is cured, then he is greatly delighted that he can run about and play. And it is the same with souls: they soon recognize that a little bitter is better than too much sweet, and they are not afraid to make the acknowledgment. Sometimes the change which takes place from one day to another seems almost magical.

A novice will say to me: "You did well to be severe yesterday; at first I was indignant, but when I thought it all over, I saw that you were quite right. I left your cell thinking: 'This ends it. I will tell Our Mother that I shall never go to Soeur Thérèse again'; but I knew this was the devil's suggestion, and then I felt you were praying for me, and I grew calm. I began to see things more clearly, and now I come to you for further guidance."

I am only too happy to follow the dictates of my heart and hasten to console with a little sweetness, but I see that one must not press forward too quickly—a word might undo the work that cost so many tears. If I say the least thing which seems to tone down the hard truths of the previous day, I see my little Sister trying to take advantage of the opening thus given her. At once I have recourse to prayer, I turn to Our Blessed Lady, and Jesus always triumphs. Verily in prayer and sacrifice lies all my strength, they are my invincible arms ; experience has taught me that they touch hearts far more easily than words. Two years ago, during Lent, a novice came to me smiling, and said: "You would never imagine what I dreamt last night—I thought I was with my sister, who is so worldly, and I wanted to withdraw her from all vain things; to this end I explained the words of your hymn:

'They richly lose who love Thee, dearest Lord;
Thine are my perfumes, Thine for evermore.'

I felt that my words sank deep into her soul, and I was overjoyed. This morning it seems to me that perhaps Our Lord would like me to gain Him this soul. How would it do if I wrote at Easter and described my dream, telling her that Jesus desires to have her for His Spouse?" I answered that she might certainly ask permission.

As Lent was not nearly over, you were surprised, dear Mother, at such a premature request, and, evidently guided by God, you replied that Carmelites should save souls by prayer rather than by letters. When I heard your decision I said to the little Sister "We must set to work and pray hard; if our prayers are answered at the end of Lent, what a joy it will be "O Infinite Mercy of our Lord I At the close of Lent, one soul more had given herself to God. It was a real miracle of grace—a miracle obtained through the fervor of a humble novice.

How wonderful is the power of prayer! It is like unto a queen, who, having free access to the king, obtains whatsoever she asks. In order to secure a hearing there is no need to recite set prayers composed for the occasion—were it so, I ought indeed to be pitied!

Apart from the Divine Office, which in spite of my unworthiness is a daily joy, I have not the courage to look through books for beautiful prayers. I only get a headache because of their number, and besides, one is more lovely than another. Unable therefore to say them all, and lost in choice, I do as children who have not learnt to read—I simply tell Our Lord all that I want, and He always understands.

With me prayer is an uplifting of the heart; a glance towards heaven; a cry of gratitude and love, uttered equally in sorrow and in joy. In a word, it is something noble, supernatural, which expands my soul and unites it to God. Sometimes when I am in such a state of spiritual dryness that not a single good thought occurs to me, I say very slowly the "Our Father," or the "Hail Mary," and these prayers suffice to take me out of myself, and wonderfully refresh me.

But what was I speaking of Again I am lost in a maze of reflections. Forgive me, dear Mother, for wandering thus. My story is like a tangled skein, but I fear I can do no better, I write my thoughts as they come; I fish at random in the stream of my heart, and offer you all that I catch.

I was telling you about the novices. They often say: "You have an answer for everything. This time I thought I should puzzle you. Where do you find all that you teach us ?" Some

are even simple enough to think I can read their souls, because at times it happens I discover to them—without revelation—the subject of their thoughts. The senior novice had determined to bide from me a great sorrow. She spent the night in anguish, keeping back her tears lest her eyes might betray her. Yet she came to me with a smile next day, seeming even more cheerful than usual, and when I said : "You are in trouble, I am sure," she looked at me in inexpressible amazement. Her surprise was so great that it reacted on me, and imparted a sense of the supernatural. I felt that God was close to us. Unwittingly—for I have not the gift of reading souls—I had spoken as one inspired, and was able to console her completely.

And now, dear Mother, I will tell you wherein I gain most with the novices. You know they are allowed without restriction to say anything to me, agreeable or the reverse; this is all the easier since they do not owe me the respect due to a Novice Mistress. I cannot say that Our Lord makes me walk in the way of exterior humiliation; He is satisfied with humbling me in my inmost soul. In the eyes of creatures all is success, and I walk in the dangerous path of honor—if a religious may so speak. I understand God's way and that of my superiors in this respect; for if the Community thought me incapable, unintelligent, and wanting in judgment, I could be of no possible use to you, dear Mother. This is why the Divine Master has thrown a veil over all my shortcomings, both interior and exterior. Because of this veil I receive many compliments from the novices—compliments without flattery, for they really mean what they say; and they do not inspire me with vanity, for the remembrance of my weakness is ever before me. At times my soul tires of this over-sweet food, and I long to hear something other than praise; then Our Lord serves me with a nice little salad, well spiced, with plenty of vinegar—oil alone is wanting, and this it is which makes it more to my taste. And the salad is offered to me by the novices at the moment I least expect. God lifts the veil that hides my faults, and my dear little Sisters, beholding me as I really am, do not find me altogether agreeable. With charming simplicity, they tell me how I try them and what they dislike in me; in fact, they are as frank as though they were speaking of someone else, for they are aware that I am pleased when they act in this way.

I am more than pleased—I am transported with delight by this splendid banquet set before me. How can anything so contrary to our natural inclinations afford such extraordinary pleasure? Had I not experienced it, I could not have believed it possible.

One day, when I was ardently longing for some humiliation, a young postulant came to me and sated my desire so completely, that I was reminded of the occasion when Semei cursed David, and I repeated to myself the words of the holy King: "Yea, it is the Lord Who hath bidden him say all these things." (cf. 2 Sam 16:10). In this way God takes care of me. He cannot always provide that strength-giving bread, exterior humiliations, but from time to time He allows me to eat of "the crumbs from the table of the children." (Mk 7:28). How magnificent are His Mercies!

Dear Mother, since that Infinite Mercy is the subject of this my earthly song, I ought also to discover to you one real advantage, reaped with many others in the discharge of my task. Formerly, if I saw a Sister acting in a way that displeased me, and was seemingly contrary to rule, I would think: "Ah, how glad I should be if only I could warn her and point out where she is wrong." Since, however, this burden has been laid upon me my ideas have changed, and when I happen to see something not quite right, I say with a sigh of relief:

"Thank God! it is not a novice, and I am not obliged to correct"; and at once I try to find excuses, and credit the doer with the good intentions she no doubt possesses.

Your devotedness, dear Mother, now that I am ill, has also taught me many a lesson of charity. No remedy is too costly, and if one does not succeed, you unhesitatingly try something new. When I am present at recreation, how careful you are to shield me from draughts. I feel that I ought to be as compassionate for the spiritual infirmities of my Sisters as you are for my bodily ills.

I have noticed that it is the holiest nuns who are most deeply loved; everyone is anxious to seek their company, and do them service, without even being asked. These very souls who are well able to bear with want of affection and little attentions are always surrounded by an atmosphere of love. Our Father, St. John of the Cross, says with great truth: "All good things have come unto me, since I no longer sought them for myself."

Imperfect souls, on the contrary, are left alone. They are treated, it is true, with the measure of politeness which religious life demands; yet their company is avoided, lest a word might be said which would hurt their feelings. When I say imperfect souls, I am not referring to souls with spiritual imperfections only, for the holiest souls will not be perfect till they are in heaven. I mean those who are also afflicted with want of tact and refinement, as well as ultra-sensitive souls. I know such defects are incurable, but I also know how patient you would be, in nursing and striving to relieve me, were my illness to last for many years.

From all this I draw the conclusion:—I ought to seek the companionship of those Sisters towards whom I feel a natural aversion, and try to be their good Samaritan. A word or a smile is often enough to put fresh life in a despondent soul. And yet it is not merely in the hope of giving consolation that I try to be kind. If it were, I know that I should soon be discouraged, for well-intentioned words are often totally misunderstood. Consequently, not to lose my time or labour, I try to act solely to please Our Lord, and follow this precept of the Gospel: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends or thy brethren, lest perhaps they also invite thee again and a recompense be made to thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame, and thou shalt be blessed, because they have naught wherewith to make thee recompense, and thy Father Who seeth in secret will repay thee." (Lk 14:12-14).

What feast can I offer my Sisters but a spiritual one of sweet and joyful charity! I know none other, and I wish to imitate St. Paul, who rejoiced with those who rejoiced. It is true that he wept with those who wept, and at my feast, too, the tears must sometimes fall, still I shall always try to change them into smiles, for " God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor 9:7).

I remember an act of charity with which God inspired me while I was still a novice, and this act, though seemingly small, has been rewarded even in this life by Our Heavenly Father, "Who seeth in secret." (Mt 6:4).

Shortly before Sister St. Peter became quite bedridden, it was necessary every evening, at ten minutes to six, for someone to leave meditation and take her to the refectory. It cost me a good deal to offer my services, for I knew the difficulty, or I should say the impossibility, of pleasing the poor invalid. But I did not want to lose such a good opportunity, for I recalled Our Lord's words : "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me." (Mt 25:40). I therefore humbly offered my aid. It was not without difficulty I induced her to accept it, but after considerable persuasion I succeeded. Every evening, when

I saw her shake her sand-glass, I understood that she meant: "Let us go!" Summoning up all my courage I rose, and the ceremony began. First of all, her stool had to be moved and carried in a particular way, and on no account must there be any hurry. The solemn procession ensued. I had to follow the good Sister, supporting her by her girdle; I did it as gently as possible, but if by some mischance she stumbled, she imagined I had not a firm hold, and that she was going to fall. "You are going too fast," she would say, " I shall fall and hurt myself! Then when I tried to lead her more quietly: "Come quicker . . . I cannot feel you . . . you are letting me go! I was right when I said you were too young to take care of me."

When we reached the refectory without further mishap, more troubles were in store. I had to settle my poor invalid in her place, taking great pains not to hurt her. Then I had to turn back her sleeves, always according to her own special rubric, and after this I was allowed to go.

But I soon noticed that she found it very difficult to cut her bread, so I did not leave her till I had performed this last service. She was much touched by this attention on my part, for she had not expressed any wish on the subject; it was by this unsought-for kindness that I gained her entire confidence, and chiefly because—as I learnt later—at the end of my humble task I bestowed upon her my sweetest smile.

Dear Mother, it is long since all this happened, but Our Lord allows the memory of it to linger with me like a perfume from Heaven. One cold winter evening, I was occupied in the lowly work of which I have just spoken, when suddenly I heard in the distance the harmonious strains of music outside the convent walls. I pictured a drawing-room, brilliantly lighted and decorated, and richly furnished. Young ladies, elegantly dressed, exchanged a thousand compliments, as is the way of the world. Then I looked on the poor invalid I was tending. Instead of sweet music I heard her complaints, instead of rich gilding I saw the brick walls of our bare cloister, scarcely visible in the dim light. The contrast was very moving. Our Lord so illuminated my soul with the rays of truth, before which the pleasures of the world are but as darkness, that for a thousand years of such worldly delights, I would not have bartered even the ten minutes spent in my act of charity.

If even now, in days of pain and amid the smoke of battle, the thought that God has withdrawn us from the world is so entrancing, what will it be when, in eternal glory and everlasting repose, we realize the favor beyond compare He has done us here, by singling us out to dwell in His Carmel, the very portal of Heaven?

I have not always felt these transports of joy in performing acts of charity, but at the beginning of my religious life Jesus wished to make me feel how sweet to Him is charity, when found in the hearts of his Spouses. Thus when I led Sister St. Peter, it was with so much love that I could not have shown more were I guiding Our Divine Lord Himself.

The practice of charity has not always been so pleasant as I have just pointed out, dear Mother, and to prove it I will recount some of my many struggles.

For a long time my place at meditation was near a Sister who fidgeted continually, either with her Rosary, or something else; possibly, as I am very quick of hearing, I alone heard her, but I cannot tell you how much it tried me. I should have liked to turn round, and by looking at the offender, make her stop the noise; but in my heart I knew that I ought to bear it tranquilly, both for the love of God and to avoid giving pain. So I kept quiet, but the effort cost me so much that sometimes I was bathed in perspiration, and my meditation

consisted merely in suffering with patience. After a time I tried to endure it in peace and joy, at least deep down in my soul, and I strove to take actual pleasure in the disagreeable little noise. Instead of trying not to hear it, which was impossible, I set myself to listen, as though it had been some delightful music, and my meditation—which was not the "prayer of quiet"—was passed in offering this music to Our Lord.

Another time I was working in the laundry, and the Sister opposite, while washing handkerchiefs, repeatedly splashed me with dirty water. My first impulse was to draw back and wipe my face, to show the offender I should be glad if she would behave more quietly; but the next minute I thought how foolish it was to refuse the treasures God offered me so generously, and I refrained from betraying my annoyance. On the contrary, I made such efforts to welcome the shower of dirty water, that at the end of half an hour I had taken quite a fancy to this novel kind of aspersion, and I resolved to come as often as I could to the happy spot where such treasures were freely bestowed.

Dear Mother, you see that I am a very little soul, who can only offer very little things to Our Lord. It still happens that I frequently let slip the occasion of these slender sacrifices, which bring so much peace, but this does not discourage me; I bear the loss of a little peace, and I try to be more watchful for the future.

How happy does Our Lord make me, and how sweet and easy is His service on this earth! He has always given me what I desired, or rather He has made me desire what He wishes to give. A short time before my terrible temptation against Faith, I had reflected how few exterior trials, worthy of mention, had fallen to my lot, and that if I were to have interior trials, God must change my path; and this I did not think He would do. Yet I could not always live at ease. Of what means, then, would He make use?

I had not long to wait for an answer, and it showed me that He whom I love is never at a loss, for without changing my way, He sent me this great trial; and thus mingled a healing bitterness with all the sweet.

Chapter 11

A Canticle of Love

It is not only when He is about to send me some trial that Our Lord gives me warning and awakens my desire for it. For years I had cherished a longing which seemed impossible of realization—to have a brother a Priest. I often used to think that if my little brothers had not gone to Heaven, I should have had the happiness of seeing them at the Altar. I greatly regretted being deprived of this joy. Yet God went beyond my dream; I only asked for one brother who would remember me each day at the Holy Altar, and He has united me in the bonds of spiritual friendship with two of His apostles. I should like to tell you, dear Mother, how Our Divine Master fulfilled my desire.

In 1895 our holy Mother, St. Teresa, sent my first brother as a gift for my feast. It was washing day, and I was busy at my work, when Mother Agnes of Jesus, then Prioress, called me aside and read me a letter from a young Seminarian, in which he said he had been inspired by St. Teresa to ask for a sister who would devote herself specially to his salvation, and to the salvation of his future flock. He promised always to remember this spiritual sister when saying Mass, and the choice fell upon me. Dear Mother, I cannot tell you how happy this made me. Such unlooked for fulfillment of my desire awoke in my heart the joy of a child; it carried me back to those early days, when pleasures were so keen, that my heart seemed too small to contain them. Years had passed since I had tasted a like happiness, so fresh, so unfamiliar, as if forgotten chords had been stirred within me.

Fully aware of my obligations, I set to work, and strove to redouble my fervor. Now and again I wrote to my new brother. Undoubtedly, it is by prayer and sacrifice that we can help our missionaries, but sometimes, when it pleases Our Lord to unite two souls for His Glory, lie permits them to communicate their thoughts, and thus inspire each other to love God more. Of course an express command from those in authority is needed for this, otherwise, it seems to me, that such a correspondence would do more harm than good, if not to the missionary, at least to the Carmelite, whose manner of life tends to continual introversion. This exchange of letters, though rare, would occupy her mind uselessly; instead of uniting her to God, she would perhaps fancy she was doing wonders, when in reality, under cover of zeal, she was doing nothing but producing needless distraction.—And here am I, launched, not upon a distraction, but upon a dissertation equally superfluous. I shall never be able to correct myself of these lengthy digressions, which must be so wearisome to you, dear Mother. Forgive me, should I offend again.

Last year, at the end of May, it was your turn to give me my second brother, and when I represented that, having given all my merits to one future apostle, I feared they could not be given to another, you told me that obedience would double their value. In the depths of my heart I thought the same thing, and, since the zeal of a Carmelite ought to embrace the whole world, I hope, with God's help, to be of use to even more than two missionaries. I pray for all, not forgetting our Priests at home, whose ministry is quite as difficult as that of the missionary preaching to the heathen.… In a word, I wish to be a true daughter of the Church, like our holy Mother St. Teresa, and pray for all the intentions of Christ's Vicar.

That is the one great aim of my life. But just as I should have had a special interest in my little brothers had they lived, and that, without neglecting the general interests of the Church, so now, I unite myself in a special way to the new brothers whom Jesus has given me. All that I possess is theirs also. God is too good to give by halves; He is so rich that He gives me all I ask for, even though I do not lose myself in lengthy enumerations. As I have two brothers and my little sisters, the novices, the days would be too short were I to ask in detail for the needs of each soul, and I fear I might forget something important. Simple souls cannot understand complicated methods, and, as I am one of their number, Our Lord has inspired me with a very simple way of fulfilling my obligations. One day, after Holy Communion, He made me understand these words of the Canticles : "Draw me: we will run after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments." (Canticles 1:3) O my Jesus, there is no need to say: "In drawing me, draw also the souls that I love": these words, "Draw me," suffice. When a soul has let herself be taken captive by the inebriating odor of Thy perfumes, she cannot run alone; as a natural consequence of her attraction towards Thee, the souls of all those she loves are drawn in her train.

Just as a torrent carries into the depths of the sea all that it meets on its way, so, my Jesus, does the soul who plunges into the shoreless ocean of Thy Love bring with it all its treasures. My treasures are the souls it has pleased Thee to unite with mine; Thou hast confided them to me, and therefore I do not fear to use Thy own words, uttered by Thee on the last night that saw Thee still a traveler on this earth. Jesus, my Beloved! I know not when my exile will have an end. Many a night I may yet sing Thy Mercies here below, but for me also will come the last night, and then I shall be able to say:

"I have glorified Thee upon earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given me out of the world. Thine they were, and to me Thou gavest them; and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things which Thou hast given me are from Thee; because the words which Thou gavest me I have given to them; and they have received them, and have known for certain that I came forth from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given me, because they are Thine. And all mine are Thine, and Thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we also are one. And now I come to Thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy filled in themselves. I do not ask that Thou take them away out of the world, but that Thou preserve them from evil. They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world. And not for them only do I pray, but for those also who through their word shall believe in me. Father, I will that where I am they also whom Thou hast given me may be with me, that they may see my glory which Thou hast given me, because Thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world. And I have made known Thy name unto them, and will make it known, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them."
(cf. John 17)

Yea, Lord, thus would I repeat Thy words, before losing myself in Thy loving embrace. Perhaps it is daring, but, for a long time, hast Thou not allowed me to be daring with Thee? Thou hast said to me, as the Prodigal's father to his elder son: "All I have is thine." (Lk 15:31). And therefore I may use Thy very own words to draw down favors from Our Heavenly Father on all who are dear to me.

My God, Thou knowest that I have ever desired to love Thee alone. It has been my only ambition. Thy love has gone before me, even from the days of my childhood. It has grown with my growth, and now it is an abyss whose depths I cannot fathom.

Love attracts love; mine darts towards Thee, and would fain make the abyss brim over, but alas! it is not even as a dewdrop in the ocean. To love Thee as Thou lovest me, I must make Thy Love mine own. Thus alone can I find rest. O my Jesus, it seems to me that Thou couldst not have overwhelmed a soul with more love than Thou hast poured out on mine, and that is why I dare ask Thee to love those Thou hast given me, even as Thou lovest me.

If, in Heaven, I find that Thou lovest them more than Thou lovest me, I shall rejoice, for I acknowledge that their deserts are greater than mine, but now, I can conceive no love more vast than that with which Thou hast favored me, without any merit on my part.

Dear Mother, what I have just written amazes me. I had no intention of writing it. When I said: "The words which Thou gavest me I have given unto them," I was thinking only of my little sisters in the novitiate. I am not able to teach missionaries, and the words I wrote for them were from the prayer of Our Lord: "I do not ask that Thou shouldst take them out of the world; I pray also for them who through their word shall believe in Thee."

How could I forget those souls they are to win by their sufferings and exhortations ?

But I have not told you all my thoughts on this passage of the Sacred Canticles: "Draw me—we will run!" Our Lord has said: "No man can come to Me except the Father Who hath sent Me, draw him," (John 6:44) and later He tells us that whosoever seeks shall find, whosoever asks shall receive, that unto him that knocks it shall be opened, and He adds that whatever we ask the Father in His Name shall be given us. It was no doubt for this reason that, long before the birth of Our Lord, the Holy Spirit dictated these prophetic words: "Draw me—we will run!" By asking to be drawn, we desire an intimate union with the object of our love. If iron and fire were endowed with reason, and the iron could say: "Draw me!" would not that prove its desire to be identified with the fire to the point of sharing its substance? Well, this is precisely my prayer. I asked Jesus to draw me into the Fire of His love, and to unite me so closely to Himself that He may live and act in me. I feel that the more the fire of love consumes my heart, so much the more shall I say: "Draw me!" and the more also will souls who draw near me run swiftly in the sweet odor of the Beloved.

Yes, they will run—we shall all run together, for souls that are on fire can never be at rest. They may indeed, like St. Mary Magdalen, sit at the feet of Jesus, listening to His sweet and burning words, but, though they seem to give Him nothing, they give much more than Martha, who busied herself about many things. It is not Martha's work that Our Lord blames, but her over-solicitude; His Blessed Mother humbly occupied herself in the same kind of work when she prepared the meals for the Holy Family. All the Saints have understood this, especially those who have illumined the earth with the light of Christ's

teaching. Was it not from prayer that St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, and so many other friends of God drew that wonderful science which has enthralled the loftiest minds?

"Give me a lever and a fulcrum on which to lean it," said Archimedes, "and I will lift the world."

What he could not obtain because his request had only a material end, without reference to God, the Saints have obtained in all its fullness. They lean on God Almighty's power itself and their lever is the prayer that inflames with love's fire. With this lever they have raised the world—with this lever the Saints of the Church Militant still raise it, and will raise it to the end of time.

Dear Mother, I have still to tell you what I understand by the sweet odor of the Beloved. As Our Lord is now in Heaven, I can only follow Him by the footprints He has left—footprints full of life, full of fragrance. I have only to open the Holy Gospels and at once I breathe the perfume of Jesus, and then I know which way to run; and it is not to the first place, but to the last, that I hasten. I leave the Pharisee to go up, and full of confidence I repeat the humble prayer of the Publican. Above all I follow Magdalen, for the amazing, rather I should say, the loving audacity, that delights the Heart of Jesus, has cast its spell upon mine. It is not because I have been preserved from mortal sin that I lift up my heart to God in trust and love. I feel that even had I on my conscience every crime one could commit, I should lose nothing of my confidence: my heart broken with sorrow, I would throw myself into the Arms of my Saviour. I know that He loves the Prodigal Son, I have heard His words to St. Mary Magdalen, to the woman taken in adultery, and to the woman of Samaria. No one could frighten me, for I know what to believe concerning His Mercy and His Love. And I know that all that multitude of sins would disappear in an instant, even as a drop of water cast into a flaming furnace.

It is told in the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert how one of them converted a public sinner, whose evil deeds were the scandal of the whole country. This wicked woman, touched by grace, followed the Saint into the desert, there to perform rigorous penance. But on the first night of the journey, before even reaching the place of her retirement, the bonds that bound her to earth were broken by the vehemence of her loving sorrow. The holy man, at the same instant, saw her soul borne by Angels to the Bosom of God.

This is a striking example of what I want to say, but these things cannot be expressed. Dearest Mother, if weak and imperfect souls like mine felt what I feel, none would despair of reaching the summit of the Mountain of Love, since Jesus does not ask for great deeds, but only for gratitude and sell-surrender.

He says : "I will not take the he-goats from out of thy flocks, for all the beasts of the forests are mine, the cattle on the hills and the oxen. I know all the fowls of the air. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof. Shall I eat the flesh of bullocks, or shall I drink the blood of goats? Offer to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving." (Ps 50:9-14).

This is all Our Lord claims from us. He has need of our love—He has no need of our works. The same God, Who declares that He has no need to tell us if He be hungry, did not disdain to beg a little water from the Samaritan woman. He was athirst, but when He said: "Give me to drink," (Jn 4:7) He, the Creator of the Universe, asked for the love of His creature. He thirsted for love.

And this thirst of Our Divine Lord was ever on the increase. Amongst the disciples of the world, He meets with nothing but indifference and ingratitude, and alas! among His own, how few hearts surrender themselves without reserve to the infinite tenderness of His Love. Happy are we who are privileged to understand the inmost secrets of Our Divine Spouse. If you, dear Mother, would but set down in writing all you know, what wonders could you not unfold!

But, like Our Blessed Lady, you prefer to keep all these things in your heart (cf. Lk 2:19). To me you say that "it is honorable to reveal and confess the works of God." (Tobit 12:7). Yet you are right to keep silence, for no earthly words can convey the secrets of Heaven.

As for me, in spite of all I have written, I have not as yet begun. I see so many beautiful horizons, such infinitely varied tints, that the palette of the Divine Painter will alone, after the darkness of this life, be able to supply me with the colors wherewith I may portray the wonders that my soul descries. Since, however, you have expressed a desire to penetrate into the hidden sanctuary of my heart, and to have in writing what was the most consoling dream of my life, I will end this story of my soul, by an act of obedience. If you will allow me, it is to Jesus I will address myself, for in this way I shall speak more easily. You may find my expressions somewhat exaggerated, but I assure you there is no exaggeration in my heart—there all is calm and peace.

O my Jesus, who can say how tenderly and gently Thou dost lead my soul! The storm had raged there ever since Easter, the glorious feast of Thy triumph, until, in the month of May, there shone through the darkness of my night one bright ray of grace…. My mind dwelt on mysterious dreams sent sometimes to Thy favored ones, and I thought how such a consolation was not to be mine—that for me, it was night, always the dark night. And in the midst of the storm I fell asleep. The following day, May 10, just at dawn, I dreamt that I was walking in a gallery alone with Our Mother. Suddenly, without knowing how they had entered, I perceived three Carmelites, in mantles and long veils, and I knew that they came from Heaven. "Ah!" I thought, "how glad I should be if I could but look on the face of one of these Carmelites!" And, as if my wish had been heard, I saw the tallest of the three Saints advance towards me. An inexpressible joy took possession of me as she raised her veil, and then covered me with it.

At once I recognized our Venerable Mother, Anne of Jesus, foundress of the Carmel in France.[35] Her face was beautiful with an unearthly beauty; no rays came from it, and yet, in spite of the thick veil which enveloped us, I could see it suffused by a soft light, which seemed to emanate from her heavenly countenance. She caressed me tenderly, and seeing myself the object of such affection, I made bold to say:

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[35] The Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus—in the world, Anne of Lobera—was born in Spain in 1545. She entered the Carmelite Order in 1570, in the first convent of St. Joseph of Avila, and shortly afterwards became the counselor and coadjutor of St. Teresa, who called her, "her daughter and her crown." St. John of the Cross, who was her spiritual director for fourteen years, described her as "a seraph Incarnate," and her prudence and sanctity were held in such esteem that the most learned men consulted her in their doubts, and accepted her answers as oracles. She was always faithful to the spirit of St. Teresa, and had received from Heaven the mission to restore the Carmel to its primitive perfection.

Having founded three convents of the Reform in Spain, she established one in France, and another in Belgium. She died in the odor of sanctity in the Carmel of Brussels on March 4, 1621. On May 3, 1878, His Holiness Pope Leo XIII signed the Decree Introducing the Cause of her Beatification.

"Dear Mother, I entreat you, tell me, will Our Lord leave me much longer in this world? Will He not soon come to fetch me?" She smiled sweetly, and answered, "Yes, soon…very soon…I promise you." "Dear Mother," I asked again, "tell me if He does not want more from me than these poor little acts and desires that I offer Him. Is He pleased with me?" Then our Venerable Mother's face shone with a new splendor, and her expression became still more gracious: "The Good God asks no more of you," she said, "He is pleased, quite pleased," and, taking my head between her hands, she kissed me so tenderly that it would be impossible to describe the joy I felt. My heart was overflowing with gladness, and, remembering my Sisters, I was about to beseech some favor for them, when, alas! I awoke. My happiness was too great for words. Many months have passed since I had this wonderful dream, and yet its memory is as fresh and delightful as ever. I can still picture the loving smiles of this holy Carmelite and feel her fond caresses. O Jesus! Thou didst command the winds and the storm, and there came a great calm. (cf. Mt 8:26-27)

On waking, I realized that Heaven does indeed exist, and that this Heaven is peopled with souls who cherish me as their child, and this impression still remains with me—all the sweeter, because, up to that time, I had but little devotion to the Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus. I had never sought her help, and but rarely heard her name. And now I know and understand how constantly I was in her thoughts, and the knowledge adds to my love for her and for all the dear ones in my Father's Home.

O my Beloved! this was but the prelude of graces yet greater which Thou didst desire to heap upon me. Let me remind Thee of them to-day, and forgive my folly if I venture to tell Thee once more of my hopes, and my heart's well nigh infinite longings—forgive me and grant my desire, that it may be well with my soul. To be Thy Spouse, O my Jesus, to be a daughter of Carmel, and by my union with Thee to be the mother of souls, should not all this content me? And yet other vocations make themselves felt—I feel called to the Priesthood and to the Apostolate—I would be a Martyr, a Doctor of the Church. I should like to accomplish the most heroic deeds—the spirit of the Crusader burns within me, and I long to die on the field of battle in defense of Holy Church.

The vocation of a Priest! With what love, my Jesus, would I bear Thee in my hand, when my words brought Thee down from Heaven! With what love would I give Thee to souls! And yet, while longing to be a Priest, I admire and envy the humility of St. Francis of Assisi, and am drawn to imitate him by refusing the sublime dignity of the Priesthood. How reconcile these opposite tendencies ?[36]

Like the Prophets and Doctors, I would be a light unto souls, I would travel to every land to preach Thy name, O my Beloved, and raise on heathen soil the glorious standard of Thy Cross. One mission alone would not satisfy my longings. I would spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth, even to the most distant isles. I would be a Missionary, not for a few years only, but, were it possible, from the beginning of the world till the consummation of time. Above all, I thirst for the Martyr's crown. It was the desire of my earliest days, and the desire has deepened with the years passed in the Carmel's narrow cell. But this too is folly, since I do not sigh for one torment; I need them all to slake my thirst. Like Thee, O Adorable Spouse, I would be scourged, I would be crucified! I would be flayed like St.

[36] St. Francis of Assisi, out of humility, refused to accept the sublime dignity of the Priesthood, and remained a Deacon until his death.

Bartholomew, plunged into boiling oil like St. John, or, like St. Ignatius of Antioch, ground by the teeth of wild beasts into a bread worthy of God.[37]

With St. Agnes and St. Cecilia I would offer my neck to the sword of the executioner, and like Joan of Arc I would murmur the name of Jesus at the stake.

My heart thrills at the thought of the frightful tortures Christians are to suffer at the time of Antichrist, and I long to undergo them all. Open, O Jesus, the Book of Life, in which are written the deeds of Thy Saints: all the deeds told in that book I long to have accomplished for Thee. To such folly as this what answer wilt Thou make? Is there on the face of this earth a soul more feeble than mine ? And yet, precisely because I am feeble, it has delighted Thee to accede to my least and most child-like desires, and to-day it is Thy good pleasure to realize those other desires, more vast than the Universe. These aspirations becoming a true martyrdom, I opened, one day, the Epistles of St. Paul to seek relief in my sufferings. My eyes fell on the 12th and 13th chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. I read that all cannot become Apostles, Prophets, and Doctors; that the Church is composed of different members; that the eye cannot also be the hand. The answer was clear, but it did not fulfill my desires, or give to me the peace I sought. "Their descending into the depths of my nothingness, I was so lifted up that I reached my aim."[38]

Without being discouraged I read on, and found comfort in this counsel: "Be zealous for the better gifts. And I show unto you a yet more excellent way." (1 Cor 12:31). The Apostle then explains how all perfect gifts are nothing without Love, that Charity is the most excellent way of going surely to God. At last I had found rest.

Meditating on the mystical Body of Holy Church, I could not recognize myself among any of its members as described by St. Paul, or was it not rather that I wished to recognize myself in all? Charity provided me with the key to my vocation. I understood that since the Church is a body composed of different members, the noblest and most important of all the organs would not be wanting. I knew that the Church has a heart, that this heart burns with love, and that it is love alone which gives life to its members. I knew that if this love were extinguished, the Apostles would no longer preach the Gospel, and the Martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. I understood that love embraces all vocations, that it is all things, and that it reaches out through all the ages, and to the uttermost limits of the earth, because it is eternal.

Then, beside myself with joy, I cried out: "O Jesus, my Love, at last I have found my vocation. My vocation is love! Yes, I have found my place in the bosom of the Church, and this place, O my God, Thou hast Thyself given to me: in the heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be LOVE!.... Thus I shall be all things: thus will my dream be realized…"

Why do I say I am beside myself with joy? This does not convey my thought. Rather is it peace which has become my portion—the calm peace of the sailor when he catches sight of the beacon which lights him to port. O luminous Beacon of Love! I know how to come even unto Thee, I have found the means of borrowing Thy Fires.

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[37] An allusion to the beautiful words of the martyr St. Ignatius of Antioch, uttered when he heard the roar of the lions In the Roman arena, "I am the wheat of Christ; let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may become clean bread."

[38] St. John of the Cross

I am but a weak and helpless child, yet it is my very weakness which makes me dare to offer myself, O Jesus, as victim to Thy Love.

In olden days pure and spotless holocausts alone were acceptable to the Omnipotent God. Nor could His Justice be appeased, save by the most perfect sacrifices. But the law of fear has given place to the law of love, and Love has chosen me, a weak and imperfect creature, as its victim. Is not such a choice worthy of God's Love? Yea, for in order that Love may be fully satisfied, it must stoop even unto nothingness, and must transform that nothingness into fire. O my God, I know it—"Love is repaid by love alone."[39] Therefore I have sought, I have found, how to ease my heart, by rendering Thee love for love.

"Use the riches that make men unjust, to find you friends who may receive you into everlasting dwellings." (cf. Lk 16:9). This, O Lord, is the advice Thou gavest to Thy disciples after complaining that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." (cf. Lk 16:8).

Child of light, as I am, I understood that my desires to be all things, and to embrace all vocations, were riches that might well make me unjust; so I set to work to use them for the making of friends. Mindful of the prayer of Elijah when he asked the Prophet Elisha for his double spirit, I presented myself before the company of the Angels and Saints and addressed them thus: "I am the least of all creatures. I know my mean estate, but I know that noble and generous hearts love to do good. Therefore, O Blessed Inhabitants of the Celestial City, I entreat you to adopt me as your child. All the glory that you help me to acquire, will be yours; only deign to hear my prayer, and obtain for me a double portion of the love of God."

O my God! I cannot measure the extent of my request, I should fear to be crushed by the very weight of its audacity. My only excuse is my claim to childhood, and that children do not grasp the full meaning of their words. Yet if a father or mother were on the throne and possessed vast treasures, they would not hesitate to grant the desires of those little ones, more dear to them than life itself. To give them pleasure they will stoop even unto folly.

Well, I am a child of Holy Church, and the Church is a Queen, because she is now espoused to the Divine King of Kings. I ask not for riches or glory, not even the glory of Heaven—that belongs by right to my brothers the Angels and Saints, and my own glory shall be the radiance that streams from the queenly brow of my Mother, the Church. Nay, I ask for Love. To love Thee, Jesus, is now my only desire. Great deeds are not for me; I cannot preach the Gospel or shed my blood. No matter! My brothers work in my stead, and I, a little child, stay close to the throne, and love Thee for all who are in the strife.

But how shall I show my love, since love proves itself by deeds? Well! the little child will strew flowers . . . she will embalm the Divine Throne with their fragrance, she will sing Love's Canticle in silvery tones. Yea, my Beloved, it is thus my short life shall be spent in Thy sight. The only way I have of proving my love is to strew flowers before Thee—that is to say, I will let no tiny sacrifice pass, no look, no word. I wish to profit by the smallest actions, and to do them for Love. I wish to suffer for Love's sake, and for Love's sake even to rejoice: thus shall I strew flowers. Not one shall I find without scattering its petals before Thee . . . and I will sing . . . I will sing always, even if my roses must be gathered from amidst thorns; and the longer and sharper the thorns, the sweeter shall be my song.

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But of what avail to thee, my Jesus, are my flowers and my songs ? I know it well: this fragrant shower, these delicate petals of little price, these songs of love from a poor little heart like mine, will nevertheless be pleasing unto Thee. Trifles they are, but Thou wilt smile on them. The Church Triumphant, stooping towards her child, will gather up these scattered rose leaves, and, placing them in Thy Divine Hands, there to acquire an infinite value, will shower them on the Church Suffering to extinguish its flames, and on the Church Militant to obtain its victory.

O my Jesus, I love Thee! I love my Mother, the Church; I bear in mind that "the least act of pure love is of more value to her than all other works together." [40]

But is this pure love really in my heart? Are not my boundless desires but dreams—but foolishness? If this be so, I beseech Thee to enlighten me; Thou knowest I seek but the truth. If my desires be rash, then deliver me from them, and from this most grievous of all martyrdoms. And yet I confess, if I reach not those heights to which my soul aspires, this very martyrdom, this foolishness, will have been sweeter to me than eternal bliss will be, unless by a miracle Thou shouldst take from me all memory of the hopes I entertained upon earth. Jesus, Jesus! if the mere desire of Thy Love awakens such delight, what will it be to possess it, to enjoy it for ever?

How can a soul so imperfect as mine aspire to the plenitude of Love? What is the key of this mystery? O my only Friend, why dost Thou not reserve these infinite longings to lofty souls, to the eagles that soar in the heights? Alas! I am but a poor little unfledged bird. I am not an eagle, I have but the eagle's eyes and heart! Yet, notwithstanding my exceeding littleness, I dare to gaze upon the Divine Sun of Love, and I burn to dart upwards unto Him! I would fly, I would imitate the eagles; but all that I can do is to lift up my little wings—it is beyond my feeble power to soar. What is to become of me? Must I die of sorrow because of my helplessness? Oh, no! I will not even grieve. With daring self-abandonment there will I remain until death, my gaze fixed upon that Divine Sun. Nothing shall affright me, nor wind nor rain. And should impenetrable clouds conceal the Orb of Love, and should I seem to believe that beyond this life there is darkness only, that would be the hour of perfect joy, the hour in which to push my confidence to its uttermost bounds. I should not dare to detach my gaze, well knowing that beyond the dark clouds the sweet Sun still shines.

So far, O my God, I understand Thy Love for me. But Thou knowest how often I forget this, my only care. I stray from Thy side, and my scarcely fledged wings become draggled in the muddy pools of earth; then I lament "like a young swallow," (Isaiah 38:14) and my lament tells Thee all, and I remember, O Infinite Mercy! that "Thou didst not come to call the just, but sinners." (Mt 9:13).

Yet shouldst Thou still be deaf to the plaintive cries of Thy feeble creature, shouldst Thou still be veiled, then I am content to remain benumbed with cold, my wings bedraggled, and once more I rejoice in this well-deserved suffering.

O Sun, my only Love, I am happy to feel myself so small, so frail in Thy sunshine, and I am in peace . .I know that all the eagles of Thy Celestial Court have pity on me, they guard and defend me, they put to flight the vultures—the demons that fain would devour me. I

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fear them not, these demons, I am not destined to be their prey, but the prey of the Divine Eagle.

O Eternal Word! O my Saviour! Thou art the Divine Eagle Whom I love—Who lurest me. Thou Who, descending to this land of exile, didst will to suffer and to die, in order to bear away the souls of men and plunge them into the very heart of the Blessed Trinity—Love's Eternal Home! Thou Who, re-ascending into inaccessible light, dost still remain concealed here in our vale of tears under the snow-white semblance of the Host, and this, to nourish me with Thine own substance! O Jesus! forgive me if I tell Thee that Thy Love reacheth even unto folly. And in face of this folly, what wilt Thou, but that my heart leap up to Thee? How could my trust have any limits?

I know that the Saints have made themselves as fools for Thy sake; being 'eagles,' they have done great things. I am too little for great things, and my folly it is to hope that Thy Love accepts me as victim; my folly it is to count on the aid of Angels and Saints, in order that I may fly unto Thee with Thine own wings, O my Divine Eagle! For as long a time as Thou willest I shall remain—my eyes fixed upon Thee. I long to be allured by Thy Divine Eyes; I would become Love's prey. I have the hope that Thou wilt one day swoop down upon me, and, bearing me away to the Source of all Love, Thou wilt plunge me at last into that glowing abyss, that I may become for ever its happy Victim.

O Jesus! would that I could tell all little souls of Thine ineffable condescension! I feel that if by any possibility Thou couldst find one weaker than my own, Thou wouldst take delight in loading her with still greater favors, provided that she abandoned herself with entire confidence to Thine Infinite Mercy. But, O my Spouse, why these desires of mine to make known the secrets of Thy Love ? Is it not Thyself alone Who hast taught them to me, and canst Thou not unveil them to others? Yea! I know it, and this I implore Thee!

I ENTREAT THEE TO LET THY DIVINE EYES
REST UPON A VAST NUMBER OF LITTLE SOULS;
I ENTREAT THEE TO CHOOSE, IN THIS WORLD,
A LEGION OF LITTLE VICTIMS
OF THY LOVE.

End of the Autobiography